C. HADDON CHAMBERS

# THE AWAKENING

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

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## A Play in Four Acts

BY

C. HADDON CHAMBERS

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BOSTON:
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

# THE AWAKENING.



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## *PERSONS CONCERNED*

MR. JAMES ST. JOHN TROWER, *Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary* (35).

MR. CECIL BIRD (24).

LORD REGINALD DUGDALE (40).

JARVIS, *Trower's Butler.*

THE COUNTESS OF WARRISTOR (40).

MISS PRESCOTT (30).

MRS. HERBERTSON (34).

THE LADY MARGARET STAINES (26).

MISS OLIVE LAWRENCE (22).

MRS. SELBY (60).

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PERIOD—1901.

## *ORIGINAL CAST OF "THE AWAKENING"*

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| *Mr. James St. John Trower* . | MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER. |
| *Mr Cecil Bird* . . . . . | MR. A. E. MATTHEWS. |
| *Lord Reginald Dugdale* . . . | MR. H. B. IRVING. |
| *Jarvis* . . . . . | MR. H. H. VINCENT. |
| *Butler* . . . . . | MR. R. E. GODDARD. |
| *The Countess of Warristor* . . | MRS. KEMMIS. |
| *Miss Prescott* . . . . . | MISS GRANVILLE. |
| *Mrs. Herbertson* . . . . . | MISS JULIE OPP. |
| *Mrs. Selby* . . . . . | MISS M. TALBOT. |
| *The Lady Margaret Staines* . | MISS GERTRUDE KINGSTON. |
| *Miss Olive Lawrence* . . . . | MISS FAY DAVIS. |

# INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

"The Awakening," the second of Mr. C. Haddon Chambers plays to be offered to the American reading public, parallels its predecessor in the admirable technical qualities of construction, of adroit selection and presentation of character, and fortunate choice of incident, in its freedom from merely theatrical expedients, its frequent wit and abundant woof of humor, that comes to the surface of his story whenever his fabric will permit. But it walks wide of the other in the choice of its subject, which dips far deeper into the pool of human life and brings up stranger things.

In "The Tyranny of Tears," Mr. Chambers was content to merely shave human nature, with delightful neatness and despatch, to the sole and commendable end of making it festally presentable; and the success of his literary barbering in the theatre answered accurately to its great merit. In its adroit, unhackneyed and satisfying treatment of the commonplace it demanded for him a station high amonghis fellow-craftsman, for it is the privilege of the very highest rank alone to give the accolade of distinction to the humble and unconsidered.

So assured a thing is Mr. Chambers' preferment that he must not be rashly blamed for throwing off the mask with an easy confidence, after the manner of surely seated tyrants of all time, and showing to his subjugated public a frown in place of the smiling subservience with which he won them. This is only human, after all, and cannot be too harshly rebuked. But it may be respectfully pointed out that, in "The Awakening," shaving has given place

to surgery, and that our author now draws blood. It is minor surgery, perhaps, and looks forward to no possibility, even, of a tragic event, but it is a more serious business than of old, goes deeper into life, and sets us thinking of matters beneath the pleasant surface that he has so successfully illustrated elsewhere.

"The Awakening" concerns itself with a crisis in the life of Mr. James St. John Trower, a general practitioner in sentiment, who during a long and industrious career of love-making, has sedulously avoided the narrowing and confining influences that necessarily cramp the efforts of the specialist who may devote himself to one woman only. He is described as a "Juggernaut in trousers," by an acute if hyperbolical critic of his conduct, and is, in fact, that generally reprobated personage, a male flirt.

It is a curious fact that goes far to rob the privilege of being a "lord of creation" of much of its attractiveness that while a coquette may serve the ends of the drama without disaster, and may even contribute by her heartless conduct to swell the sum of merriment in comedy without endangering the happy ending so beloved of theatre-goers, the introduction of a male trifler into the affairs of the stage straightway leads to trouble. It is thus Trower's sex rather than his conduct that makes it difficult to describe "The Awakening" as a comedy and quenches its otherwise gaiety with tears. He is neither as unusual nor as contemptible a type as it is the fashion to regard him, nor can he fail to awaken a sneaking sympathy in the minds of the large number of men who have neither undergone the vaccination of a serious attachment nor incurred the artificial responsibilities of matrimony. To all such this somewhat unsympathetic hero will appeal in a sneaking fashion, and not in vain, even if the sympathy

may not be expressed. With all others the unfortunate protagonist must fight a losing fight for three acts and gain at the end little more than a drawn battle with their sympathies. Yet apart from his unfortunate sentimental automatism, he is not a bad fellow, who has "never lied to a man in his life," and who would never have lied to women, had not their hasty and unexpected deductions from his words forced this repugnant expedient upon his good nature.

Trower is singularly unfortunate, as heroes go, in having to perpetrate his enormities of conduct upon two women of quite unusual charm if of widely different character. Had he trifled with less valuable human material, less coveted by other males in that inevitable process of identification that gives the drama zest, he might have come out better. For every man that really loves his theatre plays every part vicariously, being thus cheaply brave, beautiful, generous, noble or self-sacrificing, so long as the matter is flattering or in agreement with his tastes, but instantly critical and free of the author's yoke when it is no longer so. This point, upon which slenderly but securely spins the popularity of the acted drama, presses painfully upon Trower, hopelessly enslaved by the text. For both Lady Margaret Staines and Olive Lawrence, the latter played in the original production by an American, Miss Fay Davis, are drawn with quite unusual charm and presented at the critical point of the play in a scene of quite exceptional poignancy. Nothing less than a miracle can extenuate the man whose conduct brought about the fairly brutal situation at the end of Act III, and Trower's later apology, while effective in itself, cannot be regarded as ample when looked at fairly down the long perspective of the whole play.

To the catholic lover of human nature "The Awakening" presents an interesting and effective combination of character; to the more or less conventional theatre-goer only is it repugnant to see a hero that is unheroic, for nothing is more cordially disapproved and hated by this steadfast supporter of the drama than his own particular traits and weaknesses — whenever he is not obliged to recognize them as his own. So far as abundant humor, graceful and vigorous dialogue, fresh and interesting types of supplementary character, and adroit employment of them can divert attention from this halting protagonist, Mr. Chambers has protected him; but like the eloquent and able advocate of a losing cause, he gains more admiration for himself than mercy for his client.

This play was first produced in London at the St. James's Theatre, on February 6th, 1901, under the management of Mr. George Alexander. The following note, by the author, regarding its first production, will be read with keen interest.

"'The Awakening' was presented at the saddest period in recent English history. Mr. George Alexander, the manager, and Mr. Haddon Chambers, the author, were beginning to conduct a dress rehearsal of the play when word came in that the illness of Her Majesty Queen Victoria had taken a very serious turn. The rehearsal was immediately abandoned out of respect to the beloved Queen, and two hours later the Empire was thrown into unprecedented grief by the announcement that Her Majesty was dead.

"Four days after the great Queen's funeral, 'The Awakening' was produced. The entire house was of course in the deepest mourning. It was the first new play in the English language produced under the reign of King

Edward VII, and the first new play of the Twentieth Century. The principal parts were performed by Mr. George Alexander, Miss Fay Davis, Miss Gertrude Kingston, Miss Charlotte Granville, Mr. C. F. Mathews, Mr. H. B. Irving, Julie Opp, and Mr. Vincent. The play was very enthusiastically received, and was critically and appreciatively reviewed in the press. In "The Awakening" there is no question of "a problem," but there is a very serious lesson. There are many St. John Trowers in the world, and to most of them, perhaps, no awakening ever comes, but he would surely be a hard man who could live through the scenes with Olive Lawrence and Lady Margaret Staines drawn so uncompromisingly in the play without having the eyes of his soul opened to a just view of self indulgence, and the indifference to the wound inflicted upon the hearts of others which have marked the conduct of his life."

F. E. CHASE.

*Dec. 27th, 1902.*

# THE AWAKENING

## ACT I

SCENE.—TROWER'S *rooms. A drawing-room, charmingly done—Louis XV. A door up* L.C. *leads to staircase. Door* C. *leads to another room. Door* R. *leads to bedroom. It is evening, after dinner. Cigarettes, matches, spirit stand, and soda water, &c., on* L. *table.*

[*On curtain rising,* LORD REGINALD DUGDALE, MISS PRESCOTT, CECIL BIRD, *and* MRS. HERBERTSON *are playing Bridge.* MRS. H. *and* BIRD *are partners, and the former, whose partner has made trumps, is playing the two hands The play is silent for a few moments.* MISS P. *brightens up considerably, and plays in a rapid and determined way.* LORD R. *watches her play.* CECIL *hesitates before playing.*

MISS P.

[*To* BIRD.] Don't ruminate, Cecil. Play your ace. You can't take it to heaven with you.

[BIRD *plays.* MISS P. *plays from* REGGIE'S *hand third,* MRS. H. *plays fourth,*

MISS P. *takes the trick. One more round is played in the same order, completing the hand.*

MRS. H.

Cecil loves to hug his aces.

BIRD.

Cecil worries along quite well at Bridge, thank you all for kind solicitude.

LORD R.

[*Goes back to his seat.*] Three hearts, partner, and I had three honours. Twenty-four below and sixteen above—that's game—game all.

[*He marks.* MISS P. *gathers cards up and makes them.*

BIRD.

[*Also marking.*] Cecil made enough last week at the game to pay all going about expenses.

[MISS P. *cuts for* BIRD.

MRS. H.

Such as cabs, tips, button-holes, eh?

BIRD.

[*Dealing cards.*] No, not buttonholes—my florist has faith. Cabs, tips, and laundry. Cabmen, servants, and laundresses have no faith, and so Bridge becomes a blessing to the very poor.

[*Finished dealing, all take cards up and sort them.*

MISS P.

Did you ever wake up in the middle of the night and remember you had forgotten to mark "chicane"?

BIRD.

Rather, it's horrid! [*Pause and look through cards.*] No trumps!

[REGGIE *plays a card*, MRS. H. *lays hers on table.*

MISS P.

Of course.

BIRD.

One has to play the game.

LORD R.

Shall I play, partner?

MISS P.

Please. I call it a mean, grasping game to make it notories every time. Jim—Jim—

[TROWER *enters* C.

TROWER.

[*By* MISS P.] What can I do for anybody?

MISS P.

I ask you to look at these cards.

TROWER.

Most uncheerful. [*All laugh.*

MISS P.

You wouldn't laugh if you had sat like a stuck pig behind the cards I've held to-night.

MRS. H.

I hope you've something to call no trumps on.

[BIRD *passes his cards to* MRS. H.; *she looks through them, and hands them back.* REGGIE *leads.* BIRD *follows from* MRS. H.'S *hand, which is spread on table. The play goes on in silence. The tricks each time are gathered by* MISS P.

MRS. H.

[*After sixth hand.*] There, you see, we're caught in spades. Really, Cecil, it's too tiresome of you.

[*One more round played in silence.*

MISS P.

Bravo, partner! How many is that?

REGGIE.

Seven.

MISS P.

I think we can give them the rest.

TROWER.

[*Who can see* MRS. H.'S *hand.*] Yes, the rest are theirs. [*The hands are thrown down.*

LORD R.

[*Marking.*] Twelve below, and honours?

MISS P.

[*Promptly.*] Easy.

BIRD.

It afflicts me to contradict you, Miss Prescott, but I had two aces and my partner had one.

LORD R.

[*Marking.*] Thirty above.

[MRS. H. *cuts to* REGGIE. BIRD *marks.*

MISS P.

Smile, Cecil, smile.

MRS. H.

[*Crossly.*] I wish he wouldn't play such an asinine game when I'm his partner.

MISS P.

Smile, Cecil.

[LORD R. *deals,* TROWER *moves down* L. *of table, and stands below it—between* REGGIE *and* CECIL.

MISS P.

I do love a cheerful loser.

BIRD.

Very dear and charming lady, I'm not quite sure that you are sound on the question of cheerful losing.

MISS P.

What? Reggie, am I a good loser? I ask you.

REGGIE.

The best in the world.

MISS P.

I really think I am, considering I have only a miserable sixteen hundred a year, every penny of which goes on my back. [*Laughter from back room.*] What is Margaret doing, Jim?

[*Enter* JARVIS L., *with two packs of cards on small tray. He moves down to* L. *table, on which he places cards.*

TROWER.

Playing Lady Warristor a match at double dummy, and, as usual, losing everything but her temper.

MISS P.

Margaret! She is never cross with any one but me.

TROWER.

The privilege of one's best friend!

JARVIS.

Can I speak to you for a moment, sir?

[JARVIS *arranges spirit-stand on table, then gives* TROWER *a look.* TROWER *goes to him* L.C., *below* L. *couch.*

JARVIS.

[*Below* L. *sofa.*] A young lady called and asked for you just now, sir.

TROWER.

A young lady—most unusual.

JARVIS.

[*Discreetly.*] Yes, sir.

TROWER.

What name did she give?

JARVIS.

None, sir. She asked if you were alone, and when I said you had friends, she said it didn't matter, and drove away in her cab.

TROWER.

What was she like, Jarvis?

[*The players gather and sort their cards.*

JARVIS.

Most becoming young lady, sir. I'm sure it wasn't a charity case.

TROWER.

Dark or fair?

JARVIS.

Dark, sir—and very pleasing.

TROWER.

Thank you, Jarvis.

MISS P.

[*Looking at her cards in disgust.*] Oh—oh—oh! Jim, come here! [*Shows her cards.*] Now I ask you——

[TROWER *goes up to* R. *of her.*

LORD R.

[*Firmly.*] Partner, I make it hearts.

[JARVIS *exits* L.

MISS P.

[*In despair.*] And he makes it hearts. No, really, I could not play—it makes me too nervous. Take them, somebody!

[*Rises, and bangs cards on table.* TROWER, *who is on her* R., *takes them.*

TROWER.

[*Soothingly.*] But your hand goes down.

[MRS. H. *leads a card,* TROWER *puts his down on table.*

MISS P.

[*Leaving her chair, moves up* C.] I don't care whether it goes down or up. It's too disgusting! I couldn't take a trick—my highest card's a ten. You play it for me, or put it down, or throw it

out of the window. I'm far too nervous. I'll pay when the score's made up—I loathe the game.

[*Red and flurried she gets away* C. *from* TROWER, *and goes into the other room* C. *The others watch her exit.* TROWER *takes* MISS P.'S *place in the game.*

BIRD.

Really, that dear lady's temper——

LORD R.

Temper! Nonsense! Play.

[REGGIE *plays a card from* TROWER'S *hand.* CECIL *plays second after* REGGIE *says Play,* REGGIE *third,* MRS. H. *fourth.* TROWER *picks up tricks.* REGGIE *leads each time.*

TROWER.

[*After third hand.*] No diamonds, partner.

LORD R.

No diamonds!

MRS. H.

How dull!

BIRD.

I call it beastly luck!

[*Play proceeds till* LORD R. *throws down last six cards.*

TROWER.

Excellent!

BIRD.

[*Crossly.*] Simply beastly!

LORD R.

Three hearts, twenty-four; game and rubber—and four honours in one hand—sixty-four above.

[*Makes up score and account.*

[*Pause.* BIRD *also makes up account,* TROWER *and* MRS. H. *looking on.*

BIRD.

What do you make it, Lord Reginald?

LORD R.

A hundred and eighty-four points—forty-six shillings; and a pound the rubber—three pounds six——

BIRD.

That's it—it ruins my average for the week; you may say what you like, but Miss Prescott's temper is enough to spoil any game.

LORD R.

[*Rise, and drag chair over to* R. *table and sit.*] Miss Prescott is always delightful!

MRS. H.

[*Rise, and cross at back and down to* L. *sofa.*] I'll settle with you at lunch to-morrow, Reggie.

LORD R.

Whenever you like, dear friend.

BIRD.

[*Who is adding figures in a little book.*] Oh, bother!

TROWER.

What's the matter, Cecil?

BIRD.

I foresee a week of self-denial.

TROWER.

Start it with a whisky and soda.

[*At spirit-stand.*

[MRS. H. *is down at couch* L. TROWER *crosses to back of* L.C. *couch.* BIRD *rises and moves to* R. *of card-table.*

BIRD.

No, thanks. [*Closes his book.*] Eight pounds seven and six the wrong side of the week.

LORD R.

[*Yawning.*] Poor old man!

BIRD.

[*Sits on edge of card-table.*] No small luxuries next week—no self-indulgences—no pleasant little sins.

MRS. H.

No riding in cabs.

BIRD.

No, no cabs! I can't ride in 'buses because I look out of place, and I can't walk because I have a corn.

LORD R.

Is papa still obdurate?

BIRD.

Papa is a beast!

LORD R.

You shouldn't say that. I remember my dear old father—the best that ever lived—[REGGIE *takes a cigarette and lights it.* BIRD *makes a grimace and goes up* C., *a quick exit into the other room*]—saying to me once—bless me, I can see him now—you never met the old man, did you?—[*Leans back, thinking* BIRD *is still there.*]—I say, you never met—[*Looks round, rises and follows* CECIL *off, saying*]—I say, you never met the old man, did you?

[*Goes out slowly after* BIRD, C.

TROWER.

[*To* MRS. H.] Shall we make up another rubber?

MRS. H.

[*On* L. *couch.*] No, I shall have to go on to the Fullboroughs in a few moments. Smoke! [TROWER *takes cigarette from* L. *table.*] Sit and talk to me, and try not to look so *blasé.* How long it is since we have been alone together!

TROWER.

[*Sits* C.] I assure you, my dear Edith, that beastly Foreign Office—

MRS. H.

Nothing could wound me so much as an excuse from you, Jim.

TROWER.

Of course. Anyway, you know the Chief, and can imagine that since this African trouble—

MRS. H.

His lordship is fortunate in his private secretary.

TROWER.

One tries, and of course it's enormously interesting—

MRS. H.

You've not lost your ambition?

TROWER.

No, I think I shall go on all right.

MRS. H.

Some day I shall look up to you from afar and say, "There is the great man with whom I once had a sweet friendship."

TROWER.

[*With a light laugh.*] But why the distance?

MRS. H.

Because a breach either closes or widens.

TROWER.

My dear Edith, you alarm me. Is there a breach?

MRS. H.

I used to see you at least once a week.

TROWER.

This wretched war— The truth is, I have been nowhere lately.

MRS. H.

Bruton Street, for example?

TROWER.

[*With affected thoughtfulness.*] Bruton Street, Bruton Street, let me see—who's in Bruton Street?

MRS. H.

[*Imitating him.*] Yes—who is in Bruton Street? How provoking!

TROWER.

There's old Admiral Golding.

MRS. H.

Yes, and the Martineaus at 207—and—and Lady Staines at 103. [*Sweetly.*] Dear Margaret—

TROWER.

Ah! now I remember, I did call on Margaret one day.

MRS. H.

Then your brougham has been even more devoted. Three times this week these eyes have seen it at Margaret's door.

TROWER.

My dear Edith, you must have— [*Rise.*

MRS. H.

[*Interrupting quickly.*] Watched you? No! [*Slight pause.*] You know I couldn't have done that sort of thing even if my interest in you had been much greater. Say you're sorry.

[*He goes to her and sits with her on couch.*

TROWER.

I am sorry, very.

[*Sits by her on couch.*

MRS. H.

It's only a matter of having eyes.

TROWER.

I always admired yours.

MRS. H.

Naturally. And a dressmaker.

TROWER.

Explain.

MRS H.

The lady who is graciously pleased to make my frocks—

TROWER.

I have recollections of Paris.

[*He is about to take her hand, but she quickly removes it.*

MRS. H.

Foolish person. I'm speaking of simple summer frocks. Well, the lady in question lives in Sack-

ville Street, and my coachman thinks the way from Sackville Street to Sussex Square—I live there, as you used to know—is by Bond Street and Bruton Street—but no doubt you've studied the map.

TROWER.

Then I may consider myself convicted of the mild dissipation of afternoon calls. What next?

MRS. H.

Only that you ought to have called on me occasionally, all the same, we were such pals.

TROWER.

I'll come to-morrow afternoon.

MRS. H.

I shall not be at home to you.

TROWER.

That is particularly horrid of you.

MRS. H.

I shall allow you to do nothing that could pain Margaret.

TROWER.

Margaret?

MRS. H.

That is my revenge on her.

TROWER.

For what?

MRS. H.

For having robbed me of my dear friend.

TROWER.

But, my dear Edith, Margaret is nothing more to me than a friend—as you are.

MRS. H.

Oh, Jim.

TROWER.

Edith, I give you my word.

MRS. H.

Don't. I wouldn't believe you.

TROWER.

I'm prepared to take any sort of oath.

MRS. H.

I should think so.

TROWER.

[*Smiling.*] You are hopeless.

MRS. H.

Quite. Well!

TROWER.

Even if what you suggest were true, which I assure you it is not—

MRS. H.

No! No! Of course not! Of course not!

TROWER.

Even if it were true, you would be wrong, because Margaret is incapable of unreasonable jealousy.

MRS. H.

Margaret is as human as the rest of us. I am sure that if I had accepted the love you so eloquently offered me a couple of years ago, I should have been just as jealous and exacting as Margaret. Thank heavens, I preferred your friendship. However, it appears that cannot last, and I will make my exit as your dear friend as gracefully as I can. [*He is about to interrupt.*] No, don't speak. You want to say something kind, and that would really hurt me. As it is, I don't think I'm really hurt.

TROWER.

Of course, my dear Edith, you know you are hurting me.

MRS. H.

Am I, just a little? In a way I'm glad, for it shows that your heart is all right, although your life is all wrong.

TROWER.

[*Smiling but groaning.*] I know—I know.

MRS. H.

You make love to every nice woman you meet.

TROWER.

[*In despair.*] Dear Edith!

MRS. H.

With a man like you, to make love indiscriminately is a predisposition. You don't check it, and it becomes a habit; you let it run riot, and it becomes a vice. Very often you are successful, occasionally

much to your surprise and embarrassment. The reason of it is that all women are fools, and many of them unhappy fools. And so they tumble into your careless net, and then the trouble begins, or, as that slangy Cecil Bird would say, "the band plays."

TROWER.

Hard sayings, Edith. [*Rise, cross* R.C.

MRS. H.

[*Rise, go to him* C.] They are true, Jim. That's why I'm anxious about Margaret; I fear she'll have a bad time.

TROWER.

[*Lightly.*] Nonsense! [*Rises.*

MRS. H.

She is more emotional than I.

TROWER.

Nonsense!

MRS. H.

It will be a greater shock to her than it would have been to me; for the reason, if one dare say so, that she has less intelligence than I.

TROWER.

Non—— [*He is about to say Nonsense, but stops abruptly. Bows.*] There are few women, Edith, of whom that might not be said.

MRS. H.

[*Curtseying.*] So sweet of you. [*Then her manner changes and she goes to him.*] Jim, I want you to be kind to Margaret.

TROWER.

It would be impossible for you to recommend any one to my kindness in vain.

MRS. H.

Ah! how insincere. Don't you know I'm in deadly earnest. Every one knows Arthur Staines is a brute, and that Margaret has had a bad time with him.

*Enter* LADY MARGARET STAINES, C.

I want your promise that you will be kind to her.

MARGARET.

[*Down* C.] Who has Jim to be kind to? Or is it a secret?

MRS. H.

To my darling Faustine. You know my chestnut mare; she is too much for me just now, and Jim's going to ride her for a week or two. Isn't it nice of him, dear Margaret?

MARGARET.

Too sweet. Look, Jim, all winnings.

[*Showing money.*

TROWER.

Cash at Bridge is manna in the wilderness.

[LADY MARGARET *moves to* MRS H., L.C.

MRS. H.

[*Significantly.*] And so you promise to be very kind to her?

TROWER.

[*Smiling.*] I promise.

MRS. H.

[*Putting a flower straight on* MARGARET'S *dress.*] Dear Margaret, how perfectly sweet you are looking. [*Crossing and going up* R.C.] I must get my cloak.

[*Exit* MRS. H., R.

[*Pause.* MARGARET *and* TROWER *look at each other, smiling.*

MARGARET.

Well?

TROWER.

Well?

MARGARET.

How are you?

[*Holding out her hand to him.*

TROWER.

How are you?

[*Taking both her hands.*

MARGARET.

Haven't seen you alone for ages.

TROWER.

Since five o'clock this afternoon.

MARGARET.

That's ages! You don't love me.

TROWER.

You know I do.

MARGARET.

Then why in Heaven's name don't you kiss me? [*He looks cautiously round, then kisses her.*] I'm jealous.

TROWER.

Of whom?

MARGARET.

Edith.

TROWER.

Absurd!

MARGARET.

I believe she used to love you.

TROWER.

How long have you had this precious knowledge?

MARGARET.

Oh, quite a long time before—before *us*. [*Softly.*] If anything *could* have been before us.

*Enter* MRS. HERBERTSON. TROWER *goes over* L. *to bell.* TROWER *touches bell.*

MRS. H.

Good night, dear, dear Margaret.

MARGARET.

Good night, dear.

[*They kiss with much affection.*

[MRS. H. *moves up* L. *and* LADY M. *crosses* R.C.

TROWER.

[*At door.*] Mrs. Herbertson's carriage.

[TROWER *goes to the door* L. *with* MRS. H.

MRS. H.

[*Cheerfully.*] Good night, Jim. I *have* enjoyed myself. Remember your promise.

TROWER.

Good night.

[*Remains at the door for a moment.*

[MARGARET *remains* C. TROWER *comes* L. C.

MARGARET.

[R.C.] You'll come to Blair House next week?

TROWER.

[C.] Lady Warristor hasn't asked me.

MARGARET.

She's going to. Do come, Jim. You know how sweet and kind she is, and how cleverly she understands things.

TROWER.

I know. I shall certainly come if it's at all possible.

*Enter* MISS PRESCOTT, C., *and* LORD REGGIE. *They are followed by* LADY WARRISTOR *and* CECIL BIRD, *who are talking together.* LORD REGGIE *goes down* L., MISS PRESCOTT *down* C. LADY WARRISTOR *and* CECIL *stop talking up* C.

MISS P.

[C., *going to* TROWER.] You are a perfect dear.

TROWER.

[L.C.] What have I done?

MISS P.

Won that rubber for me. If you weren't already so vain I'd kiss you.

TROWER.

[*Coming nearer to her.*] Do.

MISS P.

[*Appealing to everybody.*] Well! Did you ever hear anything so impudent? Margaret, I ask you.

MARGARET.

You're blushing, my dear.

MISS P.

Of course I am. I always get red at the least thing. It's only rude health; I believe that's why no one ever conceived a passion for me, I'm too healthy.

TROWER.

[*Taking* LORD R.'s *arm and moving with him to* MISS P.] Anyway, it was Reggie who won the rubber for you, and as he has no vanity—

LORD R.

[C.] None, I assure you—you need have no scruples, Miss Prescott.

MISS P.

[*Pushing them away.*] Be off with you. [REGGIE *and* TROWER *get back* L.C.] I despise men. Cecil, where's my money? Pay up!

[*Stretches out her open hand dramatically.*

[LADY W. *joins* MARGARET *down* R.

BIRD.

[*Coming down* C.] My dear lady—

MISS P.

Dear lady be blowed. [*Holding out her hand.*] I demand money with menaces.

BIRD.

Now you really don't suppose I go about in the evening ruining my clothes with pieces of metal. In the morning your winnings shall assume the dignity of a cheque.

MISS P.

All right. [*Goes up* R.C. REGGIE *goes up* L.C. *to back.*] Margaret, I'm going. [*Goes* L.

[CECIL *crosses to* LADY W., R.C.

MARGARET.

Bring my cloak with you, dear.

MISS P.

Yes, dear.

[*Exit* L.

BIRD.

[*Who has been talking to* LADY W.] Well, good night, Lady Warristor. [*Shaking hands.*

LADY W.

Good night, Cecil. Remember Friday.

[REGGIE *goes down* R.C. *to* LADY M.

BIRD.

[C.] Friday, with great pleasure. You're very kind. Good night, Margaret. [*Shaking hands.*] Good night, Lord Reggie. Good night, Jim. [*Cross* L.C.] A thousand thanks for a most delightful evening. I've ruined my average, but my digestion is unimpaired.

[TROWER *goes to the door with him.*

TROWER.

[L.C., *in a low voice.*] I say, old man, are you really worried?

BIRD.

[C.] A bit, I confess. But don't you bother.

TROWER.

It's no bother. Come and see me at the office to-morrow.

BIRD.

You're too good, Jim. Pa's bound to unbend some time; otherwise—well, I can only anticipate a performance by the band.

TROWER.

To-morrow, then. Good night.

BIRD.

Good night, Jim. [*Goes up* L.C.

[MISS P. *with* MARGARET'S *cloak enters* R., *and cross* C. *to* MARGARET. *Exit* BIRD.

LADY W.

[*Crosses* C. *to* TROWER.] Mr. Trower, I want you to come to Blair House from Friday till Monday. Quite a small party, only ourselves.

TROWER.

There is nothing I should like better, Lady Warristor, only—I'm a little afraid of the chief.

LADY W.

Bother the chief!

TROWER.

The chief is bothered. However, I'll let you know during the week if I may leave it like that.

LADY W.

Of course I'll let you leave it—[*going up* R.]—like that—[*by door*]—and of course I shall expect you.

[TROWER *joins* LADY M. *up* C. *Exit* LADY W., R. TROWER *takes* MARGARET'S *cloak from her, and helps her on with it a little up stage* C. *They talk.* MISS P. *moves down* R.C. *to* REGGIE—*she is putting her gloves on.*

LORD R.

May I come and see you soon?

MISS P.

Any afternoon you like; but make it late, as I'm out so much. I'm doing Mrs. Koppinger's party for her, and it's a fearful bother. Where is one to get men from? I ask you.

LORD R.

Difficult just now.

MISS P.

Of course one can always fill up with the men who are men more by circumstance than choice. Like the poor, they're always with us. Bother Africa! It's swallowed all our best men.

LORD R.

[*Pulling his moustache.*] Humph!

MISS P.

[*Quickly laying her hand on his arm.*] All but a very few golden men who couldn't go, one of whom is the dearest old thing in the world, and will come and take tea with me on Tuesday at 5.30. I mention no names

[*They shake hands, and look in each other's eyes with an affection that has never been spoken.*

LORD R.

Delighted. Good night.

[*They remain* R., *talking.*

[MISS P. *goes to* MARGARET. LADY W. *bustles in* R. TROWER *touches the bell.* SERVANT *appears in doorway.*

LADY W.

Good night, Margaret. [*Kisses her. Cross* L.C. *to* TROWER.] Good night, dear Mr. Trower. It's been charming. [*Shakes hands.*

[TROWER *goes to door* L.

TROWER.

[*At door.*] Lady Warristor's carriage.

LADY W.

[*Up* L.C.] Good night, everybody. [*Cross* TROWER *to* L.] Remember Friday.

TROWER.

I do hope I'll be able to come. Good night. [*Exit* L. TROWER *crosses to back of table.*] Now, why don't you three nice people stay a little longer?

MARGARET.

[*Down* L.C.] Oh yes—do let's.

MISS P.

[*Down* R.C.] You stay, Margaret, by all means; but as for me, I'm going home. I demand eight hours' sleep. It's the only way to keep healthy in mind and body.

MARGARET.

Of course, you know I can't stay without you. How extremely disagreeable you are sometimes.

MISS P.

My dear, I hope you'll excuse my having been born; but I'm going to my lonely little bed anyway. Jim, order a hansom for me.

[*Crosses to* L. *and rings bell.*

MARGARET.

[*Following her a little.*] Oh, don't be absurd. Of course I'll drive you. Good night, Reggie. Good night, Jim.

LORD R.

Good night.

[MISS P. *waits at door* L.

MARGARET.

To-morrow.

TROWER.

Of course. [*Go up to door.*

MARGARET.

[*To* MISS P., L.C., *at door.*] Pig!!

[*Exit* MARGARET *and* MISS P., L.

[TROWER *then turns light out on* C. *table.*

TROWER.

Well, old man, I think we must have a drink.

LORD R.

[*Crossing* L.C., *looking after* MISS P.] No more, thanks; isn't she a charming woman?

TROWER.

[*Down* R.C.] Very. [*Lights a cigarette*

LORD R.

So frank! [*Sits on sofa* L.

TROWER.

[*Mildly.*] Yes. [*At table* C.

LORD R.

I don't know how to express it. I'm always a fool talking about a woman, or to one for that matter.

TROWER.

Nonsense.

LORD R.

Yes, I am; but I was going to say that there is something so magnificently honest about her. You couldn't, for instance, imagine her telling a lie or doing a mean thing.

TROWER.

No. [*Slight pause, then more decidedly.*] No—not a lie or a mean thing from a woman's point of view.

LORD R.

[*Rise, cross* C. *to him.*] One realises what an unworthy devil one is when one meets a woman like Miss Prescott.

TROWER.

Miss Prescott?

LORD R.

Yes; we're talking about her, aren't we?

TROWER.

Of course.

[LORD R. *looks at* TROWER *uneasily.*

LORD R.

I must be going. Good night.

[*Shaking hands with* TROWER.

TROWER.

[*Holding his hand.*] You are right, Reggie. She's a good soul, and goodness has a sort of unconscious freemasonry of its own.

LORD R.

No one knows that better than you, old man.

TROWER.

[*Pained.*] I! I! [*He seems about to add something, then controls himself and says quietly*] Good night.

[*Taking him up to* L. *door.*

[*Exit* LORD R. *in his own deliberate manner.*

[TROWER *looks after him, then comes into the room and is thoughtful. His thoughts are apparently painful. The noise of the front door being shut is heard.* TROWER *idly gathers the cards together, then throws them down on table and goes over to* R. *and sits.*

*Enter* JARVIS, L., *with evening newspaper on salver, which he hands to* TROWER.

JARVIS.

Shall you be going out, sir?

[*Pulling* C. *table down a little.*

TROWER.

No, Jarvis; give me a whisky and seltzer.

[*Throws himself into a chair* R.

JARVIS.

[*Goes to spirit-stand,* L., *taking a glass whisky and seltzer over on salver.*] I 'ope everything was satisfactory to-night, sir?

TROWER.

Everything but the cutlets; they weren't done.

JARVIS.

The grill's Mrs. Wickham's one weakness, sir. I

must tell her again. The Moussiline looked a dream, sir.

[*Hands drink to* TROWER, *then begins to put chairs away from* C. *table.*

TROWER.

[*Indifferently.*] Yes, you ought to have asked the name of the young lady who called.

JARVIS.

I did, sir, but she didn't give it. She laughed a little and said, "Oh, I'm nobody." [TROWER *starts slightly.*] She had a pretty way of laughin', sir.

TROWER.

You may put the hall lights out. [JARVIS *crosses to door.*] I'm going to bed.

JARVIS.

Yes, sir. [*He goes. When he reaches the door an electric bell is heard.*] That's the door bell, sir. Shall you be at home?

TROWER.

See who it is. [*Exit* JARVIS L.; *long pause. Goes softly to the door and listens.*] It's all right, Jarvis, show the lady up. [*Another pause;* TROWER *brings* OLIVE LAWRENCE *into the room.*] How do you do? [*Cross* C.

[*He then crosses back to the door* L. *He hesitates about closing it, and finally leaves it a little bit ajar. He slowly returns to her; she has moved down* R.C.

OLIVE.

[R.C., *nervously.*] Was I wrong to come?

TROWER.

[C., *smiling.*] No.

OLIVE.

[*Reproachfully.*] Only a cold "How do you do?"

TROWER.

Before Jarvis?

OLIVE.

Who is Jarvis?

TROWER.

My butler, my valet, my chief of establishment—my indispensable.

OLIVE.

Is he a tyrant?

TROWER.

Yes. [*He takes both her hands in his.*] Now explain.

OLIVE.

You are surprised.

TROWER.

Amased.

OLIVE.

[C.] And not pleased?

[TROWER *looks in her eyes, then draws her to him and kisses her.*

TROWER.

[L.C.] Will that answer do?

OLIVE.

[*Contentedly.*] Yes.

TROWER.

Well?

OLIVE.

I wanted to see you, Jim. [*Looking towards door L.*] Will Mr. Jarvis hear it if I call you Jim?

TROWER.

No; Jarvis doesn't listen—he's exceptional.

OLIVE.

I wanted to see you, so I wrote to Mr. Alwick, the solicitor, making an appointment to call on him.

TROWER.

Why didn't you make an appointment with me instead?

OLIVE.

I wanted to surprise you, and I—I wasn't quite sure if you wanted to see me in London. Mr. Alwick wrote back asking me to stay the night with his family. I'm sure it would have been very nice; they live at Hammersmith. But I went to an hotel instead—because—because—I wanted to see you.

TROWER.

But you mustn't go to hotels alone.

OLIVE.

It's only a very little one—where father used to stay when he came to London.

TROWER.

You don't understand, dear. Girls don't stay alone at hotels.

OLIVE.

But I'm a woman. You forget I'm twenty-two.
[*Leans on edge of* R. *table.*
[*Slight pause. He looks away from her.*

TROWER.

You probably haven't a maid with you?

OLIVE.

Of course not. I don't own one, unless Mrs. Selby counts. Perhaps I ought to have brought her. [*Slowly a smile steals over her face.*] Mrs. Selby would be funny in London, wouldn't she, Jim? Can't you see her side curls bobbing? [*Laughs merrily.* TROWER *melts into a laugh.*] But I forgot, I oughtn't to laugh. [*Becomes demurely grave.*] I'm in disgrace. [*Looks at him sideways.*] I oughtn't to have come. My conduct has been most improper.

TROWER.

[*Puts chair* R.C. *for her. He takes chair from* L.C. *to* C. *and sits.*] Sit down and tell me how you spent the evening.

OLIVE.

Oh, it's been a beautiful evening. I dined at my little hotel, such a good dinner, and every now and then I whispered to myself, "I'm going to meet HIM." I didn't say Jim, or "my darling"—you're sure Mr. Jarvis can't hear?

TROWER.

Quite sure.

OLIVE.

But just "him," as if there were no other man in the world. After dinner I waited a little to make sure you'd finished *your* dinner—then I took a hansom, *such* a good hansom, with spring cushions and a grey horse. I've got it still. [*Rise and cross* L. *to window.*] Do come and look. [*She goes up to window—he follows and they draw aside the blinds.*] Isn't it a good hansom?

TROWER.

Yes, and a capital horse.

OLIVE.

And the driver said he didn't in the least mind waiting! [*She comes down* L.C. *and sits on sofa* L.] Well, where was I? [*He comes down* L. *and sits by her.*] Mr. Jarvis can't see, can he?

TROWER.

No.

OLIVE.

If I weren't in disgrace, I'd kiss you—just there. [*Touches the side of his face timidly. He leans his face nearer to her. She kisses him.*] You are melting a little, aren't you, Jim?

TROWER.

Rapidly.

OLIVE.

Oh! I'm glad. You're so much nearer to me when you smile. Well, I gave the cabman this address, and we came along beautifully smoothly—he's *such* a good driver—and I still kept saying to

myself, "I'm going to see him." But suddenly a dreadful thought came—suppose you were out. I felt myself turn pale. Do you know what that feeling is?

TROWER.

Yes, dear.

OLIVE.

I suppose every one who is in love knows it. Well, we drew up at the house and you *were* at home, only—only you had a party.

[*Rises and stands by him.*

TROWER.

A very few friends.

OLIVE.

Any ladies?

TROWER.

Well, yes—certainly there were ladies.

OLIVE.

Pretty ones?

TROWER.

Ye-es—one might say so.

[*Slight pause.* OLIVE *is thoughtful; suddenly her face glows, and she puts her hands to her bosom and fully faces the audience.*

OLIVE.

[*Moves a little* C.] I wouldn't care if all the most beautiful women in London were here, so long as you kept thought of me. [*Turning to him.*

[TROWER *looks at her wonderingly. The great faith of her heart is obviously a revelation to him. She turns to him.*

OLIVE.

You do think of me—sometimes, Jim?

TROWER.

I do, Olive. [*Rises, and moves to her.*

OLIVE.

Often?

TROWER.

Always. [*Nervously.*] In truth you are very much on my conscience.

OLIVE.

[*A little archly but very tenderly.*] Is that somewhere near your heart, dear?

TROWER.

[*Much moved, comes to her.*] Very near my heart, little one.

OLIVE.

Then I'd like to stay there.
[*Putting her hand on his shoulder.*

TROWER.

You will.
[*He smooths her hair caressingly. There is a slight pause, which she breaks suddenly with a little sigh.*

OLIVE.

[*Going away* R. *a little.*] Well, when I found you had a party—[*moving up* R. *a little, looks round the room admiringly*]—and, of course, having such beautiful rooms, you must entertain your friends

TROWER.

[*Playfully.*] Don't stop to wrestle with cause and effect, dear, but go straight on.

OLIVE.

[*At back of* R.C. *chair.*] That's what I told my dear cabman to do, and he did. But of course I had no intention of letting you off; so, after what I thought a reasonable time, I told him to come straight back, and he did. [*Coming down* C.

TROWER.

And so here you are, somewhere near midnight, in the rooms of a—bachelor.

OLIVE.

Safe in the rooms of the man I love.

[*Moving towards him.*

TROWER.

But, my dear child, don't you see how compromising it is?

OLIVE.

For whom?

TROWER.

For you. [*Short laugh.*] It would be difficult to compromise me.

OLIVE.

What does compromise mean? Other people knowing when you're in love?

TROWER.

Something like that. What do you suppose, for instance, Jarvis thinks?

OLIVE.

Mr. Jarvis's reflections don't interest me.

TROWER.

[*Laughs, with a trace of vexation, and shakes her gently.*] You're a hopeless girl.

OLIVE.

[*Steadfastly.*] Hopelessly in love.

[*He sits on the edge of a table* C., *and draws her to him.*

TROWER.

Now, listen; it's natural that you shouldn't quite understand, for your bringing up was, to say the least of it, unconventional. No mother to look after you; a father who doted on you, but let you run wild like a fay.

OLIVE.

He was a darling.

TROWER.

But he was engrossed in his art. He taught you nothing.

OLIVE.

He taught me everything.

TROWER.

Nothing about the world.

OLIVE.

He hated the world. He loved only beautiful things—nature and art and truth, and he taught

me the love of them. But you taught me the love of you.

[TROWER'S *face, which is away from her and full to the audience, becomes haggard. Pause.*

OLIVE.

[*Gently—getting away a little.*] Won't you go on scolding me, Jim?

TROWER.

[*Abruptly.*] No.

OLIVE.

Please do. [*Moves* R.C.] I'm really anxious to learn things. [*Turning to him.*] Only you didn't say anything in the country about my being compromised, or about my bringing up being unconventional.

TROWER.

One dreams in the country.

OLIVE.

Yes, beautiful dreams. When will you come and dream in the country again, Jim?

TROWER.

I'm invited to your neighbourhood next week.

[*Moving* L.C.

OLIVE.

Oh, how splendid! Will you come?

TROWER.

Perhaps.

OLIVE.

And see me?

TROWER.

If I come.

OLIVE.

Where will you stay?

TROWER.

Blair House.

OLIVE.

With Lady Warristor?

TROWER.

Yes. Do you know her?

OLIVE.

Very little, but father knew her well. He painted her portrait. She sometimes asks me to the house. [*Pause.*] You don't seem glad you're coming near me, Jim. I seem to have lost you, and don't know how to win you back. I suppose it's because I don't know the way of the world well enough.

[TROWER *walks down stage* L., *a prey to painful thought. Suddenly* TROWER *comes back to her, and lifting her, he swings her standing on to the armchair. Then he steps back and stands with his arms stretched out.*

TROWER.

[*Turning and holding out his arms* C.] Come.

OLIVE.

Ah, it's really you after all.

[*She laughs gleefully, and springs into his arms.*

TROWER.

[*Repentantly.*] No! [*He moves away from her.*

OLIVE.

You are angry with me?

TROWER.

I am angry with myself—you really mustn't stay here any longer.

OLIVE.

I'm very sorry I came—very!

[*She goes slowly towards the door.*

TROWER.

Wait! What a child you are! [*Goes up* L. *and rings bell. Returning to* C.] Now look very prim, for the terrible Mr. Jarvis is coming. [OLIVE *affects a prim appearance. Enter* JARVIS, L.] My coat and hat.

JARVIS.

Yes, sir. [*Exit* L.

OLIVE.

[*In a low voice but without moving.*] What are you going to do?

TROWER.

Drive you to your hotel.

OLIVE.

In my beautiful hansom? Oh, you are good. [*Then roguishly.*] But won't it—won't it be compromising?

TROWER.

[*Smiling.*] Damnably, but less so than your being here, little one.

OLIVE.

[*Running her hands together.*] Oh, how exciting.

[*Enter* JARVIS *with hat and coat;* OLIVE *becomes prim again.* JARVIS *helps* TROWER *on with coat.*

TROWER.

You may turn these lights out, Jarvis. And—and you needn't wait up for me.

JARVIS.

Very good, sir.

[*Going away up* C.

TROWER.

[*Very formally.*] Shall we go, Miss Lawrence?

OLIVE.

[*With a pretty attempt to catch the same tone.*] I'm quite ready, Mr. Trower.

[*He lets her pass in front of him and they go out.*

[JARVIS *switches off the electric light, leaving the stage in darkness. He then follows them, closing the door after him. Slight pause. Then the bang of the front door being shut is heard.*

*Curtain.*

END OF ACT I

## *PROPERTY PLOT.*—ACT II.

| Props fastened on Scene and not moved. | | | Stage Props. | | | Hand Props. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O.P. | C. | P. | O. P. Side. | Centre. | P. Side. | |
| | | | Small wicker table.<br>Chair R. and L. of it.<br>Small table under tree.<br>Flower-bed. | Chair.<br>Flowers in pots, each side of steps.<br>Sun-dial. | Cane settee.<br>Chair L. of table behind it.<br>Flower-beds along L. | Coffee-tray and coffee-cups for six on small table by tree R.C.<br>Liqueur glasses on salver.<br>Also salver and liqueur decanters. All on table R.C.<br>Three cushions, papers, croquet mallet and wool for Cecil up R.<br>Cigarette and case for Trower up R.<br>Cigar and matches for Reggie.<br>Written letter for Olive, L.<br>Telegram on salver for footman R., telegram for Miss P., R. |

# ACT II

SCENE.—*Part of the grounds, Blair House, Dorsetshire. Garden table and chairs carelessly about—more or less under a big tree* L.C. *It is a hot day and the sun is brilliant.*

[DISCOVERED: BUTLER *and* FOOTMAN. BUTLER *puts table down* R.C. *and tea tray on it.* FOOTMAN *arranging chair* C. *On the curtain rising* FOOTMAN *arranges the tables and chairs. Approaching laughter and voices are heard off. Enter* LADY WARRISTOR *and* CECIL BIRD, *followed by* MISS PRESCOTT, *who has knitting. The ladies wear light summer frocks and garden hats.* REGGIE *moves down* L. CECIL *arranges cushion for* LADY W., R.

BIRD.

[R.C.] Any sort of exertion is quite out of the question. [*Feebly gives* LADY W. *a chair* R., *then collapses into one himself* L. *of table.*] I've eaten a lunch of truly appalling proportions.

MISS P.

[*Coming down* C.] Maintaining your average, eh, Cecil?

[MARGARET *and* TROWER *appear—walk around house.*

BIRD.

Well, yes—if you like to put it in that nasty way.

LADY W.

What a pretty frock you're wearing, Molly.

MISS P.

Yes. [L.] Isn't it sweet? My new maid did it. My wool, Cecil. [*Sits sofa* L.

[CECIL *crosses with* MOLLY'S *wool.*

LADY W.

[*Still sitting* R. *of table.*] You're very lucky. It's as much as I can do to make Annette keep the buttons on my gloves.

MISS P.

But she does your hair so beautifully.

BIRD.

[*Aside to* MISS P.] And puts it on so straight.

[*Crosses* R.C. *and sits.*

MISS P.

[*Aside to him.*] Shut up!

[LADY MARGARET *and* TROWER, *talking, come down* C. LADY M. *laughs.*

BIRD.

[*Rise.*] Dear Lady Margaret, this is the most comfy chair.

[MARGARET *sits* R.C. LORD REGGIE *comes slowly down* L. *Enter* FOOTMAN *with coffee-tray, followed by* BUTLER *with*

*liquors.* BIRD *selects another chair* R.C. *and is about to sit when* TROWER *gently takes it from him.*

TROWER.

Respect for an aged diplomat. Thanks, old man.
[*Sits* C.

[*He sits between* MARGARET *and* MISS PRESCOTT. *The* FOOTMAN *places coffee on table before* LADY W., *who pours it out.* LORD REGGIE *takes the remaining available chair and sits* L.

LADY W.

Coffee, Margaret? [CECIL *goes to* LADY W.

MARGARET.

No, thank you.
[*She lies back in her chair, fanning herself.*

LADY W.

[*Handing a cup to* BIRD.] For Miss Prescott.
[BIRD *crosses* C. *to* MISS P.; *hands cup.*
[MISS P. *puts work down on sofa.*

LADY W.

Will you take coffee, Mr. Trower?
[CECIL *crosses back to* LADY W.

TROWER.

If you please, Lady Warristor. Do you mind, Cecil?

BIRD.

Too delighted.
[*Takes cup from* LADY W. *to* TROWER, R.C.

TROWER.

[*Taking cup.*] Thanks, Cecil. Isn't he a good chap, Margaret—and all the while he's really dying to sit down.

LADY W.

There's a nice chair over there, MR. BIRD.

[*Points to a chair in the distance.*

BIRD.

[*Squats on the ground in front of table.*] Mother Earth will do for me, Lady Warristor.

[*The* BUTLER *has been offering liquors, which have been refused. He now bends down to* BIRD.

BUTLER.

[R. *of* CECIL.] Brandy, Benedictine, Kummel, sir?

BIRD.

Benedictine, please. [*Takes glass.*

[BUTLER *hands liquors to* TROWER *and takes his coffee-cup. Exit* BUTLER *and* FOOTMAN. TROWER'S *eyes are closed and his hat tilted forward.* MARGARET *peeps under his hat, then takes a flower from her belt and fastens it gently in his buttonhole.*

MISS P.

Talk, Reggie. [*Gives* REGGIE *her coffee-cup.*

LORD R.

I can't, dear friend. Talking's not in our family on the men's side. They used to call my father William the Silent.

LADY W.

What a gem of a husband he must have been.

LORD R.

He was.

LADY W.

Well, you must talk this afternoon, Lord Reggie —indeed, you all must, and be very kind and sweet to some one who's coming to spend a few hours here.

BIRD.

Who is it?

LADY W.

A girl you played croquet with here last year, Cecil. She lives in that big cottage at the far end of the village—Olive Lawrence.

[TROWER *folds his arms, but otherwise does not move.*

BIRD.

Oh, yes, rather—the painter's daughter. She's a dear.

LADY W.

Have any of you met her? [*To the others.*

MARGARET *and* MISS P.

I haven't.

LORD R.

No.

LADY W.

Do you know her, Mr. Trower?

[*Pause.* TROWER *doesn't move.*

MARGARET.

[*Shaking* TROWER *slightly.*] Jim! [TROWER *sits up as though he had been asleep.*] Lady Warristor is speaking to you.

TROWER.

Ten thousand pardons, Lady Warristor.

LADY W.

Do you happen to know a Miss Olive Lawrence in the village?

TROWER.

[*Rubbing his eyes.*] Olive Lawrence—Olive——

BIRD.

You must have met her, Jim, when you were down here fishing in April.

TROWER.

Wait a moment—yes—when I was staying at the Plough and Harrow. Of course—let me see—I met her at the vicarage—dark girl—quite right.

LADY W.

I was saying that I've asked her here for the afternoon, and we must all be nice to her. I'm afraid she has a very dull time down there, especially since her father died. Cecil, you must arrange a battle royal at croquet.

BIRD.

Anything for La belle Lawrence. I was frightfully in love with her last year. If either of us had had £5000 a year, I'd have proposed to her.

[TROWER, *who has pushed his hat back, is looking steadily at* BIRD.

MISS P.

Dear Cecil is so impressionable.

MARGARET.

But quite harmless.

BIRD.

Not so very harmless. If I were to expose my private life to the light of day——

[*Raising his hand.*

MARGARET, MISS P., LADY W.

Oh, Cecil!

LORD R.

[*Murmurs.*] Oh, Cecil!

TROWER.

[*Drowsily.*] Spare us revolting detail!

[BIRD *turns away—looks from one to the other with a stony smile.*

BIRD.

Ha! [*A pause. All laugh.*

MARGARET.

Is Miss Lawrence pretty?

[*With a side glance at* TROWER.

LADY W.

At least original.

MARGARET.

Is she pretty, Cecil? [*Still looking at* TROWER.

BIRD.

At least charming.

MARGARET.

Is she pretty, Jim?

TROWER.

[*Starting.*] May I plead that I'm but a poor judge?

MARGARET.

You dare not. [*Touching him on chest.*
[*They look into each other's eyes.*

TROWER.

[*Smiling.*] No, I dare not. [*Looking at her.*] Well, yes—speaking from memory, I should call her pretty.
[*Leans back in his chair, and closes his eyes again.*
[MARGARET *looks a little cross. She gently removes the flower she has placed in his buttonhole, and picks at it in her lap.* MISS P. *notices her.*

MISS P.

[*In a low voice.*] What babies some people are.
[MARGARET *shrugs her shoulders.*

LADY W.

Olive reminds me always of some lines poor Warristor was fond of repeating. I don't remember them properly. I never had a head for poetry, but there was something about "unpractised eyes."

TROWER.

[*Without changing his attitude.*] "Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes?"
[MARGARET *looks at him angrily, then tosses the flower over her shoulder.* MISS

PRESCOTT *sees her and catches her eye, then raises her own eyes and hands expressively, as one should say,* "*You are a fool, my dear!*"

LADY W.

That's it—that's it—"pleading to unpractised eyes." That quite describes poor little Olive. [*Naïvely.*] Isn't poetry wonderful?

BIRD.

[*With a touch of mockery.*] Wonderful—so expressive!

LADY W.

Really, she's quite fascinating. You'll love her, Margaret.

MARGARET.

[*With a courageous smile.*] I'm sure I shall, dear Lady Warristor.

LADY W.

She's as light-hearted and innocent as a child, and yet at times she gets such wise, thoughtful looks in her face.

TROWER.

"Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?"

[MARGARET *rises abruptly, and walks away with a stormy brow up* C. MISS PRESCOTT'S *eyes follows her.*

LADY W.

What a marvellous memory you have, Mr. Trower. How I have always wished I could quote nicely.

LORD R.

"Meditative guise" reminds me of my dear old mother—a sort of look of gentle anxiety—and you always knew it wasn't about herself. [*Puts cup down on table up* R., *and lights cigar with a huge sigh.*] I'm afraid it was often about me.

MISS P.

[*Rise—crosses to* TROWER—*in a whisper to* TROWER.] Listen to that dear old thing.

[TROWER *nods, but remains in the same attitude.* MISS P. *goes to* MARGARET *up* R.C.

MISS P.

[*In a low voice to* MARGARET.] I ask you not to be a ridiculous person.

MARGARET.

[*A little brokenly.*] I can't help it, Molly. He's been so strange lately, and now he's positively raving about this unknown girl.

MISS P.

Absurd! He simply quoted a line of stupid poetry.

MARGARET.

He's most dangerous when he quotes poetry.

MISS P.

Perhaps you'd like to go away behind some tree, and have a good old silly red-nosed cry all about nothing.

MARGARET.

Don't be so offensive, Molly.

MISS P.

[*Dramatically raising her hands, one of which holds her work.*] Why am I fond of this foolish woman? I ask you.

MARGARET.

[*Giving her a little secret embrace.*] Because you're a dear, good old thing. [*She is now quite recovered, and returns to the group.*] Lady Warristor, we want to see the kitchen gardens. May we?

LADY W.

[*Rise, go* R. *to* C.] Of course. [*To* CECIL, *who is lying on his back.*] Come, Cecil; don't be lazy.

BIRD.

[*Rising slowly—goes* R. *and up.*] Let us on! I adore kitchen gardens, they mean wall fruit.

[*Goes* R. LADY W. *waits. While* MARGARET *speaks to* TROWER, MISS P. *moves to* L.C.

MARGARET.

Won't you come, Jim? [*Behind his chair.*

TROWER.

[*Leaning forward and speaking with mock earnestness.*] Why did the Shah visit Moscow before Paris?

MARGARET.

I'm sure I don't know.

LADY W.

I haven't an idea.

MISS P.

[*Who is sitting and working industriously.*] I ask you.

TROWER.

[*Leaning back in his chair and closing his eyes.*] I must really think it out.

[MARGARET *pauses for a moment, then she hurries after* CECIL, *takes his arm, and they exeunt.* LADY W. *walks slowly after them.* LORD R. *sighs with relief and leans back contentedly in his chair.*

LADY W.

[*Goes up* R.C., *pausing at entrance* R.] Come, Lord Reginald!

[LORD R. *rises with a slight groan and looks piteously at* MISS P.

LORD R.

Must I?

MISS P.

Of course. [*Laughs slightly.*

[LORD R. *marches after* LADY W. *and they exeunt.*

[TROWER *remains motionless, and* MISS P. *knits industriously. His chair is next to hers, a little above. After a pause,* MISS P. *begins to hum Marguerite's spinning-song from "Faust." She makes a mistake in the air.*

TROWER.

That's wrong.

MISS P.

Is it? Then put me right, great master!

TROWER.

Not I.

MISS P.

I thought you were fussing about the Shah.

TROWER.

You didn't think anything of the kind.

Miss P.

No, I didn't. [*Still working, without looking up.*] I was wondering what your thoughts were.

TROWER.

Having no thoughts of your own, you women are always wondering what we men are thinking of.

MISS P.

Would it profit us much if we knew, rude man?

TROWER.

[*After a pause.*] No.

MISS P.

I admire your honesty.

TROWER.

I can be frank with you. You're an exceptional woman.

MISS P.

I think you ought to be frank with all women, Jim. My sex hasn't been particularly unkind to you.

TROWER.

That's right, my dear Molly, bully me.

MISS P.

Thank Heaven, that's not my mission in life.

TROWER.

I know you disapprove of me.

MISS P.

Thoroughly.

TROWER.

And dislike me.

MISS P.

Unfortunately, that doesn't follow.

[*Slight pause.* TROWER, *who is interested, is leaning forward a little.* MISS P. *continues to work.*

TROWER.

The back of your neck expresses many things, including uncompromising disapproval.

MISS P.

You leave the back of my neck alone.

TROWER.

If you insist.

MISS P.

I do.

TROWER.

Go on with what you are saying.

MISS P.

Which means that you wish me to join you in a discussion of yourself as a moral case.

TROWER.

I confess the egotism.

MISS P.

[*With sudden vehemence.*] As a moral case I detest you. You are a sort of Juggernaut in trousers. When I see a woman crying, my first thought is, "Jim Trower must have passed this way."

TROWER.

Now you are very indignant. The tip of your ear is turning red.

[MISS PRESCOTT *drops her work and rises.* TROWER *quickly rises and stops her, picks up her work and gives it to her.*

TROWER.

Oh, don't go. Don't go—[*Pauses. She looks at him indignantly*]—I beg of you.

[*Slight pause—then she resumes her seat.*

MISS P.

I stay on condition that you don't wander over me in detail as if I were a horse.

TROWER.

[*Sitting again.*] Dear Molly, I apologise. But, after all, it's a sort of compliment. It shows that your detail interests me.

MISS P.

No doubt the detail of a mouse is interesting to the cat.

TROWER.

Oh, how brutal!

MISS P.

The subject is brutal.

TROWER.

You've no heart, Molly.

MISS P.

Oh yes, I have. Since frankness is going, I'll confess I love—some one—I think as good a man as there is in the world; and I thank heaven he doesn't know it, or any one else for that matter.

TROWER.

[*Slowly.*] It was to that sort of man I suggested the other night that there was such a thing as the freemasonry of goodness, and the simple-minded thing couldn't take it to himself—wanted to pass the application to me—to me, of all people.

[*Laughs slightly.*

[*She looks at him.*

MISS P.

Guessing is dangerous, and—and a little vulgar.

TROWER.

Very.

MISS P.

I always think that to wilfully surprise another's secret is a sort of theft.

TROWER.

Exactly. Like looking through a keyhole. [*She looks at him—an awkward pause.*] [*Rather pained.*] My dear Molly, you don't suggest that I——

MISS P.

[*With a frank smile.*] No, I don't; thank goodness, with all your faults, you're a gentleman.

[*Lays her hand on his—turns away from him.*

TROWER.

[*Retaining her hand.*] I wonder why you're so different to-day—so serious and severe. I won't say it's not becoming.

MISS P.

My hand, please. I want to finish my work.

TROWER.

Only a moment longer. Your knitting needles confuse me. They seem to tease one with the domestic idea, and taunt one with the emptiness of one's life.

MISS P.

Oh, come, come!

TROWER.

It's true, my dear; empty and hollow as a drum, and for some reason you bring the realisation of it home to me. I've known you for seven or eight years quite without knowing you. Probably you don't know yourself, but as you sit there, making something comfortable for a sick soldier, breathing an atmosphere of gracious, wholesome, womanly goodness, you are a living reproach to my life.

MISS P.

[*Not looking at him, and as if quite to herself.*] I'm getting on—I'm attracting attention—at last I'm

being noticed. [*Slight pause.*] Must you still hold my hand?

TROWER.

[*Slowly.*] Only a moment longer.

[*He raises her hand to his lips.*

MISS P.

[*As before.*] I'm being made love to.

TROWER.

[*Softly.*] You're just a great dear—that's what you are, Molly.

[MISS P. *sighs, and lets her head fall back slightly—then suddenly she snatches her hand away from him and jumps up laughing.*

MISS P.

He's actually making love to me. Well, I ask you! Was there ever such a person?

TROWER.

[*Vaguely—puts chair to back of sofa,* L.] Was I making love to you?

MISS P.

And so that's how it's done? Well, I'll be honest. I can almost understand the poor things losing their heads.

TROWER.

I was very sincere, but—I was not making love to you, Molly.

MISS P.

Not? Well, it gave me a creepy feeling, anyway. What must it be when you DO make love?

TROWER.

Don't chaff me, Molly. Honestly, I shouldn't think of really making love to you. I should dread your sense of humour! [*Walks about, goes away* R.C. *a little.*] I wish I could explain what I've been feeling lately. Something has come over me that I don't understand.

[*She goes to him* R.C. *and lays a hand on his arm.*

MISS P.

Margaret is in the garden, Jim.

TROWER.

[*Vaguely.*] Margaret?

MISS P.

Yes.

[*They look at each other—slight pause.*

TROWER.

I'm not quite certain that kitchen gardens wildly excite me.

MISS P.

[*With insistence.*] Margaret adores you.

TROWER.

[*Without enthusiasm.*] Yes.

MISS P.

It's so easy for a man to give the woman who loves him a little happiness.

TROWER.

I know; but—we're all creatures of moods.

MISS P.

[*Very earnestly.*] Jim, for God's sake don't tell me you're out of love.

TROWER.

I——

[*He turns his face up stage to avoid her eyes, and sees* OLIVE LAWRENCE, *who enters conducted by a butler.* MISS P. *does not see* OLIVE. TROWER *turns quickly back to* MISS P. *and says:*

No, my dear friend, I don't think I'm out of love.

MISS P.

[*Heartily.*] I'm so, so glad. [*Turns up and sees* OLIVE. *To* TROWER *as* OLIVE *comes down alone.*] This must be Lady Warristor's young friend.

[OLIVE *seeing* JIM, *puts her hand to her heart and hesitates for one moment, then comes down.* MISS P. *goes a few steps to meet her.*

MISS P.

You are Miss Lawrence, aren't you?

OLIVE.

[*Timidly.*] Yes.

[MISS P. *crosses and shakes hands with her.*

MISS P.

[*Going up* C. *a little.*] Lady Warristor will be here presently. She is showing the gardens to some of our friends. You know Mr. Trower, don't you?

TROWER.

[*Easily.*] I hope Miss Lawrence remembers me. We met at the vicarage earlier in the year.

[*Crosses to her* L.C.

OLIVE.

Oh, I remember very well.

[MISS P. *moves down* R.C. *and sits.*

TROWER.

Is the old trout still in the pool behind your cottage?

OLIVE.

Yes, he's still there. I saw him yesterday.

MISS P.

A trout?

TROWER.

Yes; there's a deep pool in the stream there, and it's the home of a particularly wily old trout. There were two, but has it not been written: "One shall be taken and the other left"?

[*The ladies laugh*—OLIVE *a little nervously.*

MISS P.

You took the other, of course.

TROWER.

With Miss Lawrence's assistance. She handles the net like a gillie.

OLIVE.

Oh, I didn't help much. The poor thing was quite exhausted when I got the net under it.

TROWER.

And then, if I remember, you were sorry for it.

OLIVE.

Yes. I felt as if I were being treacherous to an old friend.

MISS P.

I think I'll tell Lady Warristor you are here. I know they all want to play croquet.

TROWER.

Shall I?

MISS P.

No, thanks. [*Rise.*] If I don't move—[*giving a little cry*]—my left foot will go to sleep. It always does if I sit too long after meals.

[*She goes* R.

TROWER.

[*Lighting a cigarette.*] This is a delightful place, isn't it, Miss Lawrence?

OLIVE.

[*Imitating his formal tone.*] It's beautiful, Mr. Trower. I've known it all my life. [*Going away* L.C.] [*Exit* MISS P.

[*Pause.* TROWER *looks round to see if* MISS P. *is gone.* OLIVE *is standing. She also looks round. Then their eyes meet and they smile.*

TROWER.

You dear child.

OLIVE.

I'm so frightened, Jim.

TROWER.

Of what?

OLIVE.

Of being here.

TROWER.

Why?

OLIVE.

It's all very well to be with you when no one else is near. That is very, very well; it is my heaven. But before others it is so different. I feel as if I were changing colour every moment. Do you think that lady noticed it?

TROWER.

Why, of course not.

OLIVE.

I lay awake nearly all night wondering if I ought to come. I got up at four and wrote you a note.

TROWER.

Where is it?

OLIVE.

I have it here. [*In her glove.*] To slip into your hand in case I couldn't speak to you alone.

TROWER.

Give it me.

OLIVE.

Not for worlds. It's far too stupid for a great man like you to read. It only asks you if you can get away to come to tea to-morrow. Could you?

TROWER.

Yes, at six.

OLIVE.

You promise to come, Jim?

TROWER.

I promise. Do let me have the little letter.

OLIVE.

[*Putting her hand behind her.*] But there is nothing in it but what I have been saying—and—and—a quotation. I was unable to say in my own words what I felt, and so——

TROWER.

And so you fell back upon the poets. We all do it, little one. Perhaps that's what poets were given us for. The letter. [*Stretches out his hand.*

OLIVE.

[*Timidly.*] Really?

TROWER.

[*Smiling.*] I insist.

[*She hands him the letter, then turns up stage, her back to audience.* TROWER *opens the letter—crosses and sits* L. *of* R.C. *table. He reads silently for a few moments.*

TROWER.

But your own words are beautiful.

OLIVE.

They are stupid words. [*Going to him.*

TROWER.

They are much too good for me.

[*Slight pause—he looks at the letter again.*

OLIVE.

[*Moves down to him.*] Do you like the quotation?

TROWER.

[*Reading softly.*

"Where my heart is—wherever that may be—
Might I but follow—
If you fly thither over lane and lea,
Oh, honey seeking bee,
Oh, careless swallow,
Bid one for whom I watch—keep watch for me."

[*She comes nearer to him, behind him, while he reads, and when he finishes, after a nervous glance round, she lets her hand rest on his shoulder. Without looking up he takes the hand and holds it in his. Pause. Then she starts nervously and moves away from him.*

OLIVE.

Here is Lady Warristor.

[TROWER *rises and crosses* L.C. OLIVE *moves back to* C.

TROWER.

And so you are in good practice at croquet, Miss Lawrence? [*Enter* LADY WARRISTOR, R., *and* LADY MARGARET, R.] Well, I warn you some of our friends here play very well. My cousin Cecil is a nailer.

LADY W.

[*Coming down* R.C.] My dear child, I'm so glad you've come. How are you, dear? [*Kisses her.*] This is Lady Margaret Staines. [MARGARET *bows coldly*, R.] Now shall we make up the set? [*Going to* MARGARET.] Will you play, Margaret?

MARGARET.

I'd rather not, if you can do without me, dear.

*Enter* CECIL BIRD *with croquet bat. He sits making a horse of his bat up* R.C.

[OLIVE *talks to* TROWER *with her back to* BIRD.

BIRD.

If two of you good kind people don't come soon, there'll be no match. Lord Reggie's lying on his back and beginning to snore.

LADY W.

[*To* OLIVE.] You'll play, of course, dear?

[OLIVE *turns round.*

BIRD.

[*Down* C.] Why, there's that dear Miss Lawrence. [*Down* R.C. *Going to her and taking her by the*

*hand.*] How do you do? [*Shakes hands.*] Come along; you and I'll what they call challenge the crowd.

[*Exeunt* BIRD *and* OLIVE *up* R.

[LADY W. *follows* CECIL *and* OLIVE *up* R., *then turns.*

LADY W.

You'll play, Mr. Trower?

TROWER.

I shall be——

MARGARET.

[*Cross* R.C., *interrupting.*] He's the worst player in the world, Lady Warristor. You make the fourth, and we'll come and look on.

LADY W.

As you please, dear. [*Goes.*] [*Exit* R.C.

MARGARET.

[*Turning suddenly on* TROWER *with flashing eyes.*] You have met that girl before.

TROWER.

Yes, I acknowledged it.

MARGARET.

It had to be dragged out of you.

TROWER.

Did it?

MARGARET.

Yes, it did.

TROWER.

[*Gently.*] I'm afraid I was a little sleepy after lunch.

MARGARET.

You have flirted with her.

TROWER.

[*With gentle reproach.*] My dear Margaret!

MARGARET.

Any one with half an eye can see it. [TROWER *sighs resignedly and sinks into a sofa* L.] [*Beating one hand against the other.*] I won't have it—I tell you I won't have it.

TROWER.

My dear Margaret, this is a revelation.

MARGARET.

It's a revelation to me—I trusted you.

TROWER.

I mean it's a revelation *of* you. I never would have thought you capable of such an unreasonable outburst of temper.

MARGARET.

It's not unreasonable. You've been different with me for some time. You've been distrait, preoccupied, indifferent. It's been gradual, but now I can trace

it from your visit here in April. Little things don't escape a woman who loves. When that girl's name was mentioned just now you folded your arms. When you were asked about her you pretended to be asleep to avoid acknowledging you knew her. Afterwards you lost all pretence and quoted poetry about her.

TROWER.

It was very harmless, and I've quoted volumes about you.

MARGARET.

I decline to be associated in your mind with any other woman.

TROWER.

[*Serenely.*] You are not, my dear Margaret, I assure you. [*She stands looking at him for a moment.*] Would the smoke of a cigarette occasion further annoyance? No?

MARGARET.

Jim, are you a bad man?

TROWER.

That's rather a poser, isn't it? I suppose, like most people, I am part good and part bad. But mostly bad.

[*She walks up stage—he lights cigarette. She comes down to him* C. *again.*

MARGARET.

Jim, are you capable of—of—[*she becomes tearful*]—of treating me badly?

TROWER.

I hope not, dear Margaret. Sit down. [*He makes*

*room for her on garden seat—she sits—the handkerchief she has been pulling about in her agitation she now uses for her eyes.*] Why, you are actually crying.

MARGARET.

I—I can't help it.

TROWER.

The proud, self-contained Lady Margaret actually crying and fussing about nothing.

MARGARET.

Is it nothing?

TROWER.

Yes.

MARGARET.

You like this girl?

TROWER.

[*Smiling.*] Yes.

MARGARET.

Oh!

TROWER.

Every one does, she's charming.

MARGARET.

You've been trifling with her.

TROWER.

[*Sternly.*] Margaret! How dare you say such a thing?

[*Rises indignantly.*

MARGARET.

[*Rising.*] Well, say it isn't true.

TROWER.

I absolutely decline to answer such a charge.
[*Turns away down* L.

MARGARET.

Jim, forgive me But women have instincts, and it's hard to know when we're guided by instinct or misguided by jealousy. Do say at least that I've been misguided.

TROWER.

Much misguided.

MARGARET.

Then I am sorry.

TROWER.

[*Evasively.*] Let's forget all about it.
[*Coming very close to him, she holds his arm with both hands.*

MARGARET.

I know there's nothing so boring to a man as a jealous woman. I'm not that really, Jim. I'll never be again. Only since Arthur went to Africa, we've had so much happiness that lately I've got into a nervous state of fright lest I should lose it. You forgive me, Jim?

TROWER.

Of course I do. [*She puts her face up to be kissed*

*and gets still closer to him.*] [*Looking round.*] Be careful, dear, one never knows where people are.

[*Kisses her lightly and coldly—cross* R.C.
[*Footman enters up* R. *with telegram on salver and goes off behind house* R.

MARGARET.

Make me a promise, Jim.

TROWER.

What is it?

MARGARET.

Just to humour the woman you love.

TROWER.

Well?

MARGARET.

Don't see that girl again.

TROWER.

Oh, that's sheer nonsense.

MARGARET.

Just to please me. We'll go for a long walk and she'll be gone when we return. [*Pause.*] It's nothing to ask.

TROWER.

It's something, my dear Margaret, for a man to be made a child of.

MARGARET.

Couldn't you be a child in one little thing just to give me pleasure?

TROWER.

No; those are not the sort of fetters a man can submit to from any woman.

MARGARET.

Even from the woman he professes to love?

TROWER.

I said from any woman.

MARGARET.

[*Continuing as if he hadn't spoken.*] Who has made sacrifices for him.

TROWER.

My dear Margaret, you have lost for the time your common sense when you talk like that. Sacrifices between a man and a woman in our position are not spoken of, or thought of. Please don't let us pursue the subject, for if I were to talk bald common sense and truth you would dislike me, and I should certainly dislike myself.

MARGARET.

I insist on your promise not to see that girl again.

TROWER.

[*Returns to* C.] This is a dangerous insistence. So dangerous that, for your own sake, I prefer to leave you. [*Going up* C.

[*He goes. She stands looking after him furiously. He meets* MISS PRESCOTT *up* R.C., *who has entered at the moment* R. *She is agitated, and has a telegram in her hand.*

MISS P.

Where are you going?

TROWER.

Anywhere. [MARGARET *moves away up* L.] Margaret isn't very companionable just now.

MISS P.

You mustn't go. [*Down* C.

TROWER.

What's the matter? [C.

MISS P.

Read. [*Hands him telegram—he reads.*

TROWER.

Good God! You must tell her.

MISS P.

You must help me. [*He hesitates.*] Don't be a coward, Jim.

MARGARET.

[*Coming down* C. *between them.*] What are you talking of, please? I don't care to be discussed.

MISS P.

[*Gently.*] We're not discussing you, dear.

MARGARET.

[*Looking from one to the other.*] Well, what's the matter?

MISS P.

Darling, you must be prepared for bad news.

MARGARET.

Well—what is it? What is it?

MISS P.

[*Bluntly walks away* R.C. *a little.*] After all, I can't break it to you—I can only tell you. Your husband is dead. [*Looking in front of her.*

MARGARET.

Dead? [*Her hands to her heart.*] Arthur dead?

MISS P.

He died of enteric fever. It's official. Your sister wired me to break it to you.

MARGARET.

[*Looking at telegram.*] Arthur dead? [*Pause.*] Then I'm free. [*The others make a movement.*] I'm free! Jim, I'm free! Do you hear—do you understand? I'm a free woman.

MISS P.

My dear, you mustn't talk like that. But you're upset—you don't know what you are saying.
[*Taking her up* C. *a little.*

MARGARET.

[*Releasing herself.*] But I do know what I'm saying—and what does it matter before Jim? You know what my marriage was like—you know the sort of man he was.

MISS P.

Whatever his faults, he's dead—we don't speak ill of the dead.

MARGARET.

[*Who is much excited.*] Molly, you're a child. [*Turns to* TROWER *and speaks to him in a lower but agitated voice.*] Jim, can you realise it? I'm free, and I love you! And we were nearly quarrelling. How truly ridiculous! Everything is different now, dear, isn't it?

TROWER.

Yes, yes, go with Molly. If the others come and see you going on like this there'll be a scandal.

MARGARET.

Yes, I'll go. I'll observe the proprieties. But you'll make that promise now, won't you?

TROWER.

[*Firmly.*] For Heaven's sake, Margaret——

MARGARET.

[*Fiercely.*] Make me that promise.

TROWER.

No. [*Cross* R.C.

MISS P.

Margaret, dear, in the name of decency——

[*She takes her arm.* LADY MARGARET *allows herself to be led away up* C. TROWER *remains motionless.*

MARGARET.

[*Stopping, to* MISS P.] Wait there! [*She comes back to* TROWER, R.C. *In a hoarse whisper*] You will promise?

TROWER.

No.

[LADY MARGARET *draws herself up and walks firmly back to* MISS P., *who passes her arm round her, and* MARGARET *goes out slowly, leaving* MISS P. *on top of steps.*

[TROWER *remains motionless—Curtain falls.*]

END OF ACT II

## PROPERTY PLOT.—Act III.

| Props fastened on Scene and not moved. | | | Stage Props. | | | Hand Props. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O. P. | C. | P. | O. P. Side. | Centre. | P. Side. | |
| Pictures on wall.<br>Gun and bow on wall.<br>Tapestry from ceiling to floor. | | Picture over door up stage. | Small table below door with painting materials.<br>Easel against flat.<br>Piano, with vases of flowers, drawings, &c.<br>Piano-stool R.C.<br>Vase, statue, drawings, &c., in a heap down R.<br>Settee and two cushions down R.<br>Black helmet.<br>Rocking-chair.<br>Sword hanging on flat.<br>Chair behind couch.<br>Lamp on piano. | Table, with tea-cloth in drawer, in window.<br>Chair R. and L. of window.<br>Books and work-basket on table.<br>Basket of flowers on platform.<br>Grandfather's clock R. of platform.<br>Chair L. of platform.<br>Paint-table, with paints, brushes, &c. C.<br>Easel with picture on it C.<br>Pots of flowers on floor under window. | Cabinet of china up L.<br>Two vases of flowers.<br>Two ornaments, photographs on mantelpiece.<br>Rug in front of fire-place.<br>Kettle of hot water on fire.<br>Chair in front of fire.<br>Table L. C.—Chair above.<br>Small table down L.<br>Writing materials, two candlesticks, two empty glass vases on table.<br>Book-shelf and books on flat down L., lamp on china cabinet.<br>Set brass fire-irons. | Tea-tray off L.<br>Tea—two cups and saucers.<br>Tea-cakes, sugar and milk for Mrs. Selby off L. Book of Keats' Poems on chair in window.<br>Tea-cloth in drawer of table by window. |

# ACT III

SCENE.—OLIVE'S *home. The cottage in the village. A room which, although typically of an old-fashioned English cottage character, is full of memories of the Artist who decorated, furnished, and lived in it*—OLIVE'S *father. The principal entrance is* R.C. *Blue china is a main feature in the decoration of the room. In the corner* L.C. *is a collection in two large Chippendale cases.*

[*It is late in the afternoon when the curtain rises.* OLIVE *is discovered; she is not easily seen as her back is to the audience, and she is sitting in a large chair in the window* C. *Before her is a small easel, and she is at work on a picture. After a pause enter* MRS. SELBY. *She is a very neatly dressed old woman, wearing old-fashioned side curls, and is very agreeable to look upon. She carries a table-cloth, which she spreads on a small table well up* L.C.]

MRS. S.

How is the picture getting on, Miss Olive?

OLIVE.

[*Without turning.*] Badly. [*Sits on arm of settee* R. MRS. S. *spreads the cloth.*] Is it nearly six?

MRS. S.

It wants fifteen minutes to. [*Crossing* R.C. *between* OLIVE *and easel. She puts on her spectacles with great deliberation. She wears them low on her nose, and has to throw her head back to look at the picture.*] Well, I think it's beautiful.

OLIVE.

[*Shortly.*] It's horrid.

MRS. S.

Indeed, Miss Olive, it reminds me of your poor dear father's pictures—the same colouring, so to speak.

OLIVE.

[*Rise.*] Oh, Mrs. Selby, how dare you say such a thing? Father was a great painter, and I'm a contemptible little failure.

MRS S.

Well, I like it, Miss Olive; but then I'm no judge.

OLIVE.

[*Moving back to* R. *and looking at picture.*] It's a beastly picture.

[*Crosses to easel; begins to paint it out wrathfully.*

MRS. S.

Oh, Miss Olive!

OLIVE.

[*Continuing the work of destruction.*] Beastly—beastly.

MRS. S.

Oh, Miss Olive!

OLIVE.

Beastly, perfectly beastly—there!

MRS. S.

Oh, Miss Olive! A whole day's work!

OLIVE.

[*Half to herself—going to sofa* R. *and sit.*] I couldn't have let him see it.

MRS. S.

Who, dearie?

OLIVE.

[*Rise and crosses to easel.*] The greatest critic in the world.

MRS. S.

Is he coming to tea?

OLIVE.

He is.

[*She is putting her easel away* R. *and tidying up generally.*

MRS. S.

It's as well I made some fresh tea-cakes this morning.

OLIVE.

[*Puts paint, &c., away up* R.C.] He graciously condescended to approve of your tea-cakes last April.

[*Puts paint table away up* R. MRS. S. *helps her.*

MRS. S.

Oh, it's Mr. Trower.

OLIVE.

[*Thoughtfully.*] I don't think I'll have you call him Mr. Trower—[MRS. S. *untying her apron*]—it's not awesome enough. There are so many Misters in the world, and only one Great Man. Ah!—[*pleased with the thought*]—that's it. We shall speak of him as the Great Man! For instance you will come to me and say: "I passed the Great Man in the village, Miss Olive, and he gave me a beautiful smile." Or, "I'm so glad the Great Man liked my tea-cakes, Miss Olive; it was very kind and thoughtful of him." [*She laughs merrily.*] Will you remember?

MRS. S.

Indeed I will, Miss Olive.

[*She takes some flowers from up* C. *to place on the tea-table.*

[OLIVE *arranges cushion on sofa* R.

OLIVE.

No—no. [*Takes them from her—crosses to table* C.] I'll do that. You shall do all the rest.

[*Below table.*

MRS. S.

Very well, dearie.

[*Exit* MRS. SELBY, L.

[OLIVE *arranges flowers on the tea-table. She hums an air; once she goes to a window to see if her lover is coming.* MRS. S. *returns, carrying the tea-tray; begins to lay the tea.*

OLIVE.

[*Is arranging flowers in a vase which she has got from* L. *table. Suddenly she goes up* C. *and listens.*] Listen! There's a carriage stopping. He's come! [*To herself.*] I knew he'd keep his promise. [*Aloud.*] I'll just tidy my hair.

[*Coming down* C. *and over to door* L.

MRS. S.

But, dearie, it's beautiful. [*Moving down* C.

OLIVE.

Only one hairpin more. Now, will you open the door—or shall Jane? I think you must—you look so sweet. Jane's good, but plain.

[OLIVE *bustles off quickly by door down* L. MRS. S. *smooths her apron and gives one little look in the glass to see that her side curls are straight. The good lady is gently excited and her face is wreathed in smiles. There is a knock at the door.* MRS. S. *opens it.*

MRS. S.

Come in, sir. [LADY MARGARET *and* MISS PRESCOTT *are at the door—pause.*] I—I beg your pardon, ladies.

LADY M.

Is Miss Lawrence at home?

MRS. S.

Yes, ma'am; won't you come in?

[LADY M. *and* MISS P. *enter.* MRS. S *closes door after them and crosses* C.

LADY M.

Will you tell Miss Lawrence that Miss Prescott and Lady Margaret Staines have called to see her?

MRS. S.

Miss Olive will be here in a moment, my lady. She's just gone to smooth her hair. I'll bring the tea in.

[*Takes the basket of flowers from* C. *and goes off* L. *Exit* MRS. SELBY, L.U.E.

LADY M.

[*Looking around the room and then at the tea-table.*] Two cups, you see! One for Jim, of course. How touching!

MISS P.

[*Down* R.C.] The extra one may be for the local curate.

LADY M.

We shall see.

MISS P.

I hope you will remember you promised me to behave nicely to this little girl, otherwise I shouldn't have come.

LADY M.

I've promised myself to learn the truth.

[*Crosses* MISS P. *to* R.C.

[OLIVE *enters quickly with a glad look.*

OLIVE.

Well?

[*Then she sees the ladies and stops short.*

MISS P.

[*To* OLIVE.] How do you do, Miss Lawrence? Lady Margaret and I thought we'd call to see you as we were passing.

LADY M.

[*Bowing.*] Good evening.

[*Go to her* C., *shake hands and return again to* R.C.

OLIVE.

Good evening. I'm very pleased.

[*Return to* L.C.

MISS P.

[C.] We've heard so much from Lady Warristor of your pretty cottage. [*Going up* C. *a little.*] It is pretty, isn't it, Margaret?

LADY M.

Very.

MISS P.

Such charming taste.

OLIVE.

The taste was my father's, you know. He was an artist.

MISS P.

One can see that at a glance.

OLIVE.

I often think that his spirit still lives here, and that is why I am never lonely.

[*Enter* MRS. S. *with tea and tea-cakes,* &c.

OLIVE.

[*Going to chair* L. *of table.*] Won't you sit down and have some tea?

LADY M.

[*Sitting* R.] No tea, thanks.

[OLIVE *whispers to* MRS. S., *who goes and gets another cup out of cabinet up* L.

MISS P.

[*Aside to her.*] Don't be so beastly ungracious. [*Aloud.*] I'll have some tea, if you please. I'm just dying for a cup.

[*She goes to* OLIVE, *who sits at tea-table and officiates.* MRS. S. *brings cup down and puts it on table* R. *of* OLIVE, *she then goes over to fire and brings kettle from the hob.*

LADY M.

No, thanks.

OLIVE.

Sugar, Miss Prescott?

MISS P.

No sugar, thanks—[*Sits* L. *of table*]—and may I take one of those delicious-looking cakes?

[MRS. S. *moves around to* R. *of* OLIVE *with kettle.*

OLIVE.

Do. They are Mrs. Selby's pride.

[*Sits at back of table.*

[MISS P. *takes a cake and eats heartily, also takes her tea.* MRS. S. *pours water into teapot, and then goes off up* L.

MISS P.

They're too nice. Margaret, you're a fool.

LADY M.

I'm afraid we're in the way. You were expecting some one, Miss Lawrence?

OLIVE.

Why do you think that, Lady Margaret?

LADY M.

It was very rude of me to notice, no doubt, but there were two cups.

MISS P.

Extremely rude.

OLIVE.

Not at all. [*Slight pause.*] Mr. Trower said he might call. But—but I wasn't sure—anyway I'm glad some one has come to appreciate Mrs. Selby's cakes.

MISS P.

You're a dear child, and I shall have another.

[*Takes one.*

LADY M.

Strange! I thought it might be Mr. Trower.

MISS P.

Hasn't it been a perfect day, Miss Lawrence? Have you been out much?

OLIVE.

No. I've been trying to work all day.

MISS P.

You paint, perhaps?

OLIVE.

Very badly.

LADY M.

You've known Mr. Trower a long time, haven't you?

OLIVE.

Only a few months.

MISS P.

The artistic impulse is often hereditary. I'm sure you paint better than you say.

OLIVE.

I wish I could think so.

LADY M.

I think Mr. Trower might have told us he was coming, and given us an opportunity of——

MISS P.

[*Interrupting.*] We've made the opportunity for ourselves I'd like to see some of your work, Miss Lawrence, when I come again. Will you let me?

OLIVE.

Of course I will. You are very kind.

LADY M.

I suppose you find living in this out of the way place a little dull.

OLIVE.

Oh no, it's very nice.

LADY M.

But there can't be many pleasant people to know.

OLIVE.

There are some.

LADY M.

It must have been quite exciting when Mr. Trower was staying in the village.

OLIVE.

It was very pleasant.

LADY M.

Quite a new experience?

[MISS P. *puts cup on table.*

OLIVE.

Will you have some more tea, Miss Prescott?

MISS P.

No, thank you, dear.

LADY M.

Quite a new experience?

OLIVE.

In what way, Lady Margaret?

LADY M.

Well, you must suffer from a dearth of men down here.

OLIVE.

I don't think I've noticed it.

LADY M.

Anyway, the advent of so—so amiable a person must have been a godsend.

OLIVE.

Mr. Trower is always very agreeable.

LADY M.

He is very popular in London, so one can understand his being at least equally successful here.

OLIVE.

I suppose so. [*Embarrassed pause.*

LADY M.

Did he come to see you often? But perhaps you think the question rude?

OLIVE.

Do you think it rude, Lady Margaret?

MISS P.

I do. [*Slight pause.*

LADY M.

It isn't intended to be. You see, we are Mr. Trower's most intimate friends, and are naturally very interested in his doings.

MISS P.

[*To* OLIVE.] You will understand, my dear, that Lady Margaret is speaking for herself. I haven't the least interest in Mr. Trower's movements.

LADY M.

[*Resentfully to* MISS P.] Thank you, dear, you are always so tactful and helpful. You needn't trouble to answer my question, Miss Lawrence, if it embarrasses you.

OLIVE.

Why should it, Lady Margaret?

LADY M.

I'm sure I don't know.

OLIVE.

It—it doesn't. [*Slight pause.*] Mr. Trower was kind enough to call sometimes.

LADY M.

And, of course, you met him out?

OLIVE.

Yes—sometimes.

LADY M.

Don't you think he talks very well?

OLIVE.

Very well.

LADY M.

And reads?

OLIVE.

Reads?

LADY M.

Poetry.

OLIVE.

Oh, yes!

LADY M.

Are you fond of poetry?

OLIVE.

Very.

[LADY MARGARET *rises and walks up* R.C. *to conceal her emotion. She is clenching and opening her hands.* OLIVE *remains still looking straight in front of her.* MISS P. *looks from one to the other anxiously—pause—*MISS PRESCOTT *rises and moves up to* MARGARET *up* C.

MISS P.

I really think we must go now, Margaret.

LADY M.

[*Recovered.*] In a minute. Oh, what a charming edition of Keats.

[*She takes up a book which is lying on a chair in the window.*

[OLIVE'S *lips tighten, but she does not look round.*

MISS P.

Do let me see it.

[LADY M. *opens the book at the fly-leaf, reads what is there, and her face darkens. She hands the book to* MISS P., *who is on her* L.

MISS P.

[*Reading in a low voice.*] "To Olive from Jim." Well—that proves nothing.

[*Hands the book back and crosses down* R.

LADY M.

It suggests everything. [*She throws the book aside and comes down to* OLIVE, C.] Mr. Trower gave you that book?

OLIVE.

Yes. [*Rises and offers her chair to* LADY M. *Slight pause.*] Won't you sit down again, Lady Margaret?

LADY M.

No.

OLIVE.

[*Moves down to* L. *corner of table.*] I'm sorry. I'm afraid you are displeased.

LADY M.

Probably your favourite poem of Keats is the "Ode to the Nightingale"?

OLIVE.

Yes.

LADY M.

Because it is Mr. Trower's?

OLIVE.

Because I think it the best.

LADY M.

I was rude enough to look at the inscription in

that book. I seem to be committed to rudeness to-day.

OLIVE.

I'm sure you wouldn't intentionally be rude, Lady Margaret.

[LADY M. *is taken aback;* MISS P. *leans on back of* R. *sofa.*

MISS P.

[*Coming down* L.] I ask you, Margaret, to exercise some self-control. [*Pause.*

[LADY M. *walks a little way* R. *and back.*

LADY M.

[*More gently.*] I don't wish to be horrid. It isn't like me. I think you'll acknowledge that, Molly.

MISS P.

Of course I do, dear. I assure you, Miss Lawrence, Lady Margaret is the best-natured creature in the world. Come, Margaret, we really must go.

LADY M.

I think it my duty first to tell Miss Lawrence, who doesn't know the world as we do, that for a man like Mr. Trower to inscribe a book to her in that way, isn't—isn't right. [*Pause.*] It isn't done except among very intimate friends, who are accustomed to address each other by their Christian names. [*Awkward pause. Impatiently.*] Molly, you know it isn't.

MISS P.

Certainly, my dear; but it seems to me that Mr. Trower is the proper person to address on the subject. [OLIVE *is standing with her head bowed.*

LADY M.

[*Tentatively.*] Of course if Miss Lawrence is accustomed to address Mr. Trower by his Christian name—[*Pause—receiving no reply she proceeds*]—if they have reached that degree of intimacy—[*Pause—moves a little towards* OLIVE.] I think you might answer my question, Miss Lawrence.

OLIVE.

[*Raising her head.*] What question, Lady Margaret?

LADY M.

Do you and Mr. Trower address each other as—as Jim—and Olive? That is your name, I think?

[MOLLY *moves down* R. *a little.*

OLIVE.

I would always wish to address Mr. Trower in any way that he prefers.

LADY M.

[*Angrily.*] That is only a long way of saying yes.

[*Going up* C. *Pause.*

MISS P.

[*With sudden determination crosses* L.C. *and shakes hands with her.*] Good afternoon, dear Miss Lawrence. Thank you so much. I've enjoyed my tea enormously. I'll come and see you next time I'm at Blair House. Of course you may stay if you like, Margaret, but my own feeling is—— [*Going up* C.

LADY M.

[*Interrupting—stopping her* C.] Stay with me only

two minutes more, Molly. [*In a lower voice.*] I beg you in the name of our friendship. [*With a sign of resignation* MISS P. *crosses and sits on sofa again* R.C. LADY M. *seems to have again succeeded in controlling herself—crosses to* R. *of* L. *table.*] I only want to say, Miss Lawrence, that if I have seemed unkind—I—I am sorry.

OLIVE.

[*Distressed—going to her.*] Oh, please don't say any more, Lady Margaret.

LADY M.

I was only speaking in your own interest.

MISS P.

I hate rot.

LADY M.

You know I was—partly. [*To Molly.*] You know it is not a good thing for a young and unprotected girl like Miss Lawrence to receive attentions which mean nothing from a man in the position of Mr. Trower.

OLIVE.

It is very kind of you, Lady Margaret, to take an interest in—in my interests.

LADY M.

Such an intimacy, however harmless—[*pause—she looks at* OLIVE]—however innocent—[*another slight pause*]—can lead to no good. It might give rise to mistaken ideas, to—to hopes which—which could never be realised. Anyway, it is certain to occasion gossip. If you had had as much experience of the world as I have, Miss Lawrence, you would know

that it is very—very ill-natured. There is nothing so easy to lose as one's good name.

OLIVE.

Yes!

LADY M.

I don't blame you—I have no right to. But I do blame Mr. Trower—[*Turning to* MISS P.]—and I suppose you'll admit, Molly, I have that right.

MISS P.

Tell him so then.

OLIVE.

What right, Lady Margaret?

[*Pause.* LADY M. *and* MISS P. *look at each other.*

MISS P.

[*With a warning gesture to* LADY M.] The right of a friend, of course.

LADY M.

The right of one of his most intimate friends. Our little coterie of friends, Miss Lawrence, are like members of the same family. We stick up for each other and criticise each other, and, if necessary, blame each other, just like brothers and sisters. And none of us could possibly approve of these—these secret visits of Mr. Trower's to you—particularly as he will be getting married very soon.

OLIVE.

[*Turning white.*] Married?

LADY M.

Well? [MISS PRESCOTT *rises.*

OLIVE.

It's not true.

LADY M.

Indeed!

OLIVE.

[*Smiling incredulously.*] He would have told me.

LADY M.

[*Quickly, crosses* C.] Then you admit there is something between you?

OLIVE.

[*Alarmed.*] I don't know what you mean?

LADY M.

[*Fiercely, going to her.*] That there is something *more* between you and Mr. Trower than poetry and friendship.

OLIVE.

[*Shrinking away from* L.] I can't—I can't talk to you, Lady Margaret.

MISS P.

[R.C., *passionately.*] Stop, Margaret! I can't stand it. Look at that child's face. It's whiter than her frock. [NOTE: OLIVE *is in white.*

LADY M.

It only shows I'm right.

MISS P.

Come home, then.

[OLIVE *moves to fireplace.*

LADY M.

I mean to know for certain.

MISS P.

[*Much agitated.*] In God's name, haven't you any heart?

[*Pointing to* OLIVE, *who has covered her face with her hands.*

LADY M.

[*With great passion,* R.] Heart! Heart! You dare ask me that, when you know it's breaking—torn to pieces. Why should your pity go to others? How dare you, I say—you who pretend to love me?

[*Down* L.C.

MISS P.

[*Struggling with her emotion, up* R.C.] I do love you, and I pity you—I pity you all—but I can't stand it. I can't help anybody—I must go. Give me my things. [LADY M. *hastily hands her handkerchief, gloves, &c., which are on* C. *table.*] I wasn't made for this sort of thing. [*Half sobbing.*] I could cry myself to death—I really could. I only ask that you'll all be kind to each other; but I've endured all

I can. Don't bother—I'll walk home. I really couldn't stay.

[MISS P. *makes this speech as one who only just avoids an hysterical attack of weeping. Exit* MISS P., R.

[LADY M. *remains perfectly still until* MISS P. *is gone.* OLIVE *remains* L. *She has removed her hands from her face, and is supporting herself with one hand on a table or chair. There is a considerable pause after* MISS P.'S *exit.*

LADY M.

[R. *of* L.C. *table.*] Tell me the truth, Miss Lawrence; we are alone now, and can bare our hearts to each other without any one knowing. If you will be frank with me, I swear that no one shall ever know besides ourselves, and I—I'll be a friend to you, I promise you I will.

OLIVE.

[*Rises.*] There is nothing that I can tell you, Lady Margaret.

LADY M.

Will you answer my questions?

OLIVE.

I can't—when—when they are about other people.

LADY M.

You mean about Mr. Trower?

OLIVE.

Yes.

LADY M.

I'll ask you something, then, quite kindly and without any anger—you see how quiet I am—just as one woman to another. Are you in love with him?

OLIVE.

[*Crosses* R.] I can't answer you, Lady Margaret; I can't talk with you like this. I don't want to be rude, but won't you go away now?

LADY M.

Your evasion answers me. [*Going towards her* R.C.] Oh, you foolish, foolish girl, if you only knew! He has made love to you, and you have listened to him—believed him?

OLIVE.

Please go away.

LADY M.

[*Coming close to her.*] Tell me.

OLIVE.

[*Moving to* LADY MARGARET, *for the first time showing indignation.*] I'll tell you nothing—answer nothing. I'll not discuss Mr. Trower with you—I'll not lay bare my heart to you.

LADY M.

Good God, he's not your lover?

OLIVE.

Please go away.

LADY M.

Is he your lover?

OLIVE.

Won't you please leave me?

LADY M.

[*With increasing vehemence.*] Answer me.

OLIVE.

You frighten me. If you won't go, I must.
[*Turns to go* L.

LADY M.

[*Stopping her* C.] Wait. [*Catching her by her arm.*] You won't trust me with your secret—I'll trust you with mine. [*Turning away down* L.C.] He is my lover. [*There is a pause.*

OLIVE.

[*In a hoarse whisper.*] It's not true.

LADY M.

[*Going up to her.*] It's true; but don't look at me like that. I'm sorry I was obliged to tell you.

OLIVE.

[*Wildly.*] It's not true. It's not true. Go away, please. It's not true. [*A little* R.

LADY M.

It's been true for over a year. Ask him.

OLIVE.

I believe in him. I shall die believing in him.

LADY M.

You poor little fool! [*Moving towards her.*

OLIVE.

[*Shrinking away to sofa*, R.] No—go away—can't you see that I must be alone?

[*She sits on couch* R., *and buries her face in the cushions.* LADY MARGARET *looks at her and hesitates—pause—suddenly her face softens and she is drawn sympathetically towards the little figure on the couch. She goes towards her, and when near stretches out her hand as if to touch her. Then her mood changes, her face hardens. She withdraws her hand. She takes her parasol and slowly leaves the room*, R., *closing the door gently after her. After a pause,* OLIVE *looks up. She has not cried, but there is a look of pain and fear in her face. She rises, and mechanically puts the cushion straight on the couch.*

OLIVE.

[*Sol.*] It's a lie. [*Goes up* R.C. *and looks at door* R.] I believe in him! I believe in him! [*She clasps her hands, which are still trembling slightly; she smooths her hair back.*] If he would only come! [*She goes up to window, there she picks up the "Keats"* LADY M. *has thrown down; she smooths the pages that have been turned by the fall.*] I must believe in him—though he doesn't come.

*Enter* MRS. SELBY, L. *Crosses to* L.C. *table.*

MRS. S.

Shall I take the tea-things, Miss Olive?

OLIVE.

Yes, please.

MRS. S.

[*Behind the table.*] The Great Man didn't come after all.

OLIVE.

The Great Man didn't come.

MRS. S.

Perhaps he forgot.

OLIVE.

Perhaps he forgot.

MRS. S.

Men promise so lightly—even Great Men, don't they, dearie?

OLIVE.

[C., *obstinately, but with a little catch in her throat.*] I believe in him.

MRS S.

Of course, dear. [*Picks up tea-tray.*] No doubt he'll come to-morrow. [*Puts tray up* C.] Perhaps you'd like to move the flowers yourself, dearie?

OLIVE.

Yes.

[*Is below table. She gathers the flowers from the tea-table.*

MRS. S.

[*Returns to table. Seeing* OLIVE *closer.*] What's the matter, Miss Olive? You look like the ghost of yourself.

OLIVE.

I am the ghost of myself—perhaps.

[*She crosses* R., *takes the flowers to* R., *and rearranges them in the vases. Then her head droops on her hands.* MRS. SELBY *watches her sympathetically from the table—pause. Goes up—takes up tea things again.*

MRS. S.

You could write him, you know, dearie.

[*She takes the tea-tray and exit up* L.

OLIVE.

[*Rising.*] It was a lie. I'll write to him.

[*Takes writing materials and ink from* L. *to* L.C. *table. With some show of energy she sits down* L. *of table to write.* OLIVE *hesitates for a moment and then suddenly begins to write with great rapidity and agitation. After finishing a page she stops and reads what she has written. She hesitates, then slowly tears up the paper.*

OLIVE.

[*Pen between her fingers; suddenly she takes a sheet*

*of paper and writes*] "Won't you come to me before my heart breaks?

[*She folds the paper, puts it in an envelope, addresses and blots it, then rises, pushes chair back. She comes a little down, pressing the letter against her heart.*

Won't you come to me before my heart breaks?

[*Slight pause.*

That might make him think I doubted him, which I don't.

[*She looks at the letter and puts it against her cheek.*

I can't send it.

[*Crosses to fire, puts letter in fire. Rises.*

I can't even cry.

[*Her eyes have a wild strained look. At a few paces from the mirror she sees her reflection and stares at herself.*

Cry a little, eyes, won't you?

[*She utters a dry gasping sob, and turning towards door* R. *walks slowly towards it, her head thrown back.*

*Enter* MRS. SELBY, L.

MRS. S.

Where are you going, Miss Olive?

OLIVE.

[*Opening door.*] Into the air.

MRS. S.

Does your head ache, dearie?

OLIVE.

No, I don't think so.

MRS. S.

Shall I come with you?

OLIVE.

No. I think I must go alone.

[*Exit* OLIVE, R. *Pause.* MRS. SELBY *shuts door.* OLIVE *appears at the window* C.

MRS. S.

[*Opening window.*] Be careful, dearie; the pool is deep.

OLIVE.

You can see the bottom when it doesn't rain.

[OLIVE *disappears.*

[MRS. SELBY *stands* C. *at the window looking out for some moments. She then comes down into the room and busies herself putting things straight.*

MRS. S.

[*Thoughtfully.*] What can be the matter with the child?

[*She returns to the window and looks out, evidently watching* OLIVE *with earnest attention. A considerable pause.* MRS.

SELBY *puts cloth from* L.C. *table in drawer of table in window.*

[*The evening shadows are falling. An old clock in the room strikes three-quarters of the hour. There is a knock at the door, but* MRS. SELBY *does not hear—a slight pause—enter* TROWER—MRS. SELBY *hears him and turns.*

TROWER.

[R.C.] Good evening, Mrs. Selby. Where is Miss Olive?

MRS. S.

[C., *pointing.*] She is there, sir.

TROWER.

What is she doing?

MRS. S.

[*Coming down* C. *a little.*] Only looking into the water. But she seems strange to-night. I'm worried about her.

TROWER.

Has anything happened?

MRS. S.

Nothing, sir—only two ladies called.

TROWER.

[*Frowning.*] I thought so.

MRS. S.

And I'm afraid there was some angry feeling,

for I couldn't help hearing their voices were raised, and——

[TROWER *turns quickly and exits* R.

[*A pause. Then he is seen passing outside the window quickly.* MRS. SELBY'S *eyes follow him. Goes to window.*

TROWER.

[*Outside.*] Olive!

OLIVE.

[*Outside.*] Jim!

MRS. S.

[*Comes down* L.C. *She gives signs of a gentle agitation—Sol.*] Perhaps the Great Man loves her.

[*Very softly she goes* L. *and exits* L.U.E. *just as* OLIVE *and* TROWER *pass the window. Slight pause.*

*Enter* OLIVE *and* TROWER, R.; *he is half supporting her with his right arm. She comes into the room while he remains for a moment to close the door. She turns and faces him. He goes to her, looking at her earnestly. He crosses and puts hat on table,* L.C.

OLIVE.

[L.C.] It is really you. I thought you would never come again. But I didn't doubt you—never for a moment.

TROWER.

[C.] What were you doing at the water?

OLIVE.

Only looking in. [*Very nervously, with a touch of*

*suppressed hysteria.*] I thought I might see that wily old trout that even you couldn't catch. But I could see nothing. My eyes ache, Jim.

TROWER.

Why do your eyes ache, little one?

OLIVE.

Because I can't cry.

TROWER.

Why should you cry?

OLIVE.

Because I was unhappy until you came. But you know I didn't doubt you, don't you?

TROWER.

Yes.

OLIVE.

Say that you love me.

[*Stretching out her arms towards him.*

TROWER.

I love you.

[*He holds her in his arms.*

OLIVE.

I'm tired.

TROWER.

Lie down for a little while.

[*Crosses to sofa and fixes cushions.*

OLIVE.

No. [*Going to sofa.*] But I'd like to close my

eyes just for a minute with my head on your shoulder. May I?

[*Sits on sofa.*

TROWER.

Of course.

[*Sits by her.*

OLIVE.

Sit here, then. [*Goes to the couch. He sits, she sits beside him, closes her eyes, and rests her head on his shoulder. He passes his arm round her.*] How good you are to me.

TROWER.

[*Kissing her hand.*] You mustn't go so near to the water again.

OLIVE.

I promise. Were you afraid for me?

TROWER.

Yes.

OLIVE.

If I had fallen in, you would have been sorry.

TROWER.

[*With a shudder.*] Don't.

[*He holds her closer to him.*

[*Pause. Her eyes are closed.* TROWER *stares in front of him; his face is haggard.*

OLIVE.

[*Dreamily.*] You couldn't say that you loved me unless it were true.

TROWER.

No.

OLIVE.

[*Raising her head.*] Jim, I'm so happy again. [*Raising herself.*] What reason had Lady Margaret for telling me lies?

TROWER.

Lady Margaret?

OLIVE.

Yes.

TROWER.

What did she tell you?

OLIVE.

I can't say it.

TROWER.

Tell me.

OLIVE.

I didn't mean to mention it, although it nearly killed me. I didn't mean even to speak of it.

TROWER.

Tell me.

OLIVE.

She said—that—that you were her lover. [TROWER *rises, crosses* C.] You are angry. [*Rises.*] But I didn't believe it, Jim. I didn't even ask you to deny it just to please me, did I? I don't ask you now—I don't ask you to say anything. [*Pause. She looks at him, but he is not looking at her. Then she adds in a low voice*] We'll never speak of it again, dear.

TROWER.

We must speak of it.

OLIVE.

No, forgive me, and don't say any more.

TROWER.

I must—I must.

OLIVE.

No, no, it's unworthy of you and me.

TROWER.

[*Not looking at her.*] Lady Margaret spoke the truth.

OLIVE.

[*Quickly.*] No! [*She trembles and stretches out her arms as if to ward off a blow.*] No—take it back—it isn't true.

TROWER.

It is true!

OLIVE.

No! [*Slight pause.*] Not when you came to me. Years ago, perhaps; but not—not when you—not when you first said you loved me.

TROWER.

It was true then.

[OLIVE'S *arms fall to her side. She becomes rigid. Pause.* TROWER *looks at her for the first time since he began his confession, and is alarmed.*

TROWER.

[*Going to her.*] Olive, Olive.

[*He stretches out his arms towards her—she shrinks away from him.*

OLIVE.

[*Moving back in terror as he advances.*] No, no, no! [TROWER *stops.*] Don't come near me—I'm frightened of you. Oh, my God! My God! What shall I do? What shall I do? [*Pause—suddenly she comes a few paces towards him and stops.*] Say it—[*leans on back of sofa*]—isn't true—or kill me. [*Pause. He folds his arms very tightly across his chest.*] Be kind—be a little kind.

TROWER.

[*Gently, not looking at her, but with authority.*] Sit down.

OLIVE.

[*Weakly.*] Yes—yes—[*she sits on sofa* R.]—perhaps I haven't understood.

[*She sits at the end of the couch, looking at him vaguely.*

TROWER.

I won't lie to you—I can't.

OLIVE.

No.

TROWER.

Don't look at me.

OLIVE.

I beg your pardon. [*She looks down.*

TROWER.

It would be less brutal to lie to you than to tell you the truth, but I can't do it! I have lied to

women all my life—I, who have never, that I know of, lied to a man; but I can't to you—you compel the truth—perhaps it is because I love you. You won't understand half I confess. You couldn't understand the miserable, pleasure-seeking, remorseless life led by such an egotist as I have been. I have told many women that I loved them, knowing that I lied. I hadn't even the excuse of mistaking passion for love. Down here last April I told you that I loved you. I lied. It wasn't true then. It wasn't true till yesterday—yesterday when you came down the garden at Blair House. That was my awakening—too late for forgiveness—or is it not too late? God knows. To a man or woman of my own world I could perhaps excuse myself of everything except my sin against you. With many of us—not all, thank God—love is only a game—a game in which each plays for his or her hand, greedy for passing pleasure. That is the life I have lived. But I have repented—I have suffered remorse. I have come to-day to lay my wretched life at your feet: to ask you not to forgive, but to deal mercifully with me—to make what you can of me—to be my wife. Don't think that in asking you to marry me I imagine I am making atonement. Don't even think I could deem myself a worthy husband for you. I only know that I love you, and that my confession became inevitable from the moment of our meeting in the garden yesterday. I haven't slept since, and I was late in coming to you to-day because of the fear that I was coming to hear my doom. Olive, Olive, have you any mercy? Speak to me—one word.

[OLIVE *turns, looks down at him for a moment, rises and stands in front of couch.*

OLIVE.

There is nothing to say.

TROWER.

[*Rises.*] Pity.

OLIVE.

Yes. Go

TROWER.

Don't send me away.

OLIVE.

You are not mine.

TROWER.

Every throb of my heart is yours.

OLIVE.

[*Leaning with her left hand on the back of the couch, waves her right towards the door.*] Please.

TROWER.

[*Rises.*] I dare not leave you alone.

OLIVE.

The spirit of my father lives here. He loved me.

TROWER.

I may come again?

OLIVE.

Never!

TROWER.

But I would watch over you.

OLIVE.

[*Bitterly.*] I know the way of the world now.

TROWER.

Olive! [OLIVE *moves towards him.*] Have mercy!

OLIVE.

[*Raising her hand.*] Stop! [*She raises herself to her full height.*] You—you compromise me!

[*Very slowly* TROWER *goes* R. *and exits, shutting door after him.* OLIVE *stands rigid for a moment, then stretches out her hands as if she cannot see, and walks two paces.* TROWER *slowly passes the window.*

[R.C., *in a whisper*] Father—you can hear me, can't you? [*A little louder.*] I didn't know, dear—I didn't know.

[*She gropes her way to the wall up* C. *and slides down, her back to the audience. She lies prone. Suddenly she bursts into sobs. A pause.*

*Curtain.*

END OF ACT III

# ACT IV

SCENE—*Same as Act I. It is about five in the afternoon.*

[*On curtain rising there is a pause. Then the main door opens and* TROWER *enters. He is dressed for the afternoon, and still wears his hat and gloves.* JARVIS *follows him into the room.* TROWER, *though as carefully groomed as always, looks pale and ill.* TROWER *hands* JARVIS *his hat.*

TROWER.

Any one here?

[*Begins to take gloves off*, L.C.

JARVIS.

[*Cross* C.] Mr. Harris, the election agent, and two other gentlemen, sir.

TROWER.

In the library?

JARVIS.

Yes, sir.

TROWER.

You'll have some tea sent in there.

JARVIS.

Yes, sir. [TROWER *hands gloves to* JARVIS.] Are you at home, sir?

TROWER.

To any of my friends, yes. And I wish to know immediately when Miss Prescott calls. Mr. Harris won't detain me long. Any letters?

JARVIS.

Several, sir.

[TROWER *goes to his desk*, R., *and eagerly turns letters over. He selects the largest envelope, glances at the handwriting, hesitates for a moment, then opens it.* JARVIS *watches him with a discreetly sympathetic expression.* TROWER *takes from the envelope several unopened letters he has sent to* OLIVE. *They drop from his fingers on to the desk.*

TROWER.

My letters—unopened! [*He looks up and meets* JARVIS'S *eyes. Harshly.*] What the devil are you staring at, Jarvis? How dare you!

JARVIS.

[*Very cut up.*] I beg your pardon, sir—I forgot myself. [*He hurries to the door*, L.] I had no thought of being impertinent. I beg your pardon, sir. [*Exit* JARVIS, L.

[*Slight pause.*

TROWER.

Jarvis! Jarvis!

[JARVIS *appears at door* L., *returns to* L.C.

JARVIS.

Yes, sir.

TROWER.

[R.] I spoke hastily, Jarvis. I'm sorry.

JARVIS.

[L.C.] O sir, I beg of you——

TROWER.

You mustn't mind. I don't think I'm very well.

JARVIS.

I've noticed it for some time; and you'll forgive me, sir, but I've been anxious about you.

TROWER.

[*Hastily.*] It's nothing, Jarvis. You're a good fellow, but it's nothing. A little over-work, perhaps, and I don't sleep well; but I'm all right. That will do.

JARVIS.

Thank you, sir. [*Exit* JARVIS, L.

TROWER.

It's nothing—nothing! [*Clenches his hands.*] Only that it's a bore to carry one's heart in one's face for every one to peer at. [*He is struggling to master himself—he goes to desk.*] It's nothing, my good, kind Jarvis, at all.

BIRD.

[*Outside.*] All right, Jarvis; you needn't bother.

[TROWER *puts letters in his pocket, then lightly brushes his eyes with his handkerchief, and begins writing.*

*Enter* CECIL BIRD.

BIRD.

How are you, Jim, old man?

TROWER.

[*Without turning, and affecting to write.*] How are you, Cecil?

CECIL.

What they call—I'm sure I don't know why—rumbo!

TROWER.

[*Turning with a smile.*] Descriptive, I suppose, of elephantine health—[*rises*]—rhymes with Jumbo.

[*Crosses to* C.

BIRD.

That must be it. You were always a genius. Well, how goes it? But—[*looking at* TROWER *seriously*]—I say, old man!

TROWER.

Well, what the devil's the matter?

BIRD.

That's what I want to know. You're looking beastly seedy.

TROWER.

I was never better in my life, so that subject is closed.

BIRD.

[*Puts his hand on his shoulder.*] I am sorry I spoke, but I am purely sympathetic—[*stroking his hat*]—and as I haven't come on the borrow, I may be permitted to say I'm very fond of you. [*Turning away.*] You've been very good to me.

TROWER.

Rot!

BIRD.

The best in the world.

TROWER.

You will oblige me, Cecil, by not making those stupid remarks. [*Crosses to writing-table and sits.*] I happen to be a sort of murderer, so please shut up. Now, I can only give you two minutes. No less a person than the Conservative agent of Parlington is waiting in the library.

BIRD.

How dull! But that reminds me to congratulate you. Political rumour points to an important Under-Secretaryship for our Jim. The cry is, "Forward, James!"

TROWER.

[*Laughing.*] That's about it.

BIRD.

Well, I'm glad, because you like it. To borrow

the language of a racing friend of mine, "'Ave a go, Squire!"

TROWER.

All I ask for, my dear Cecil, is plenty of work. Now I must really send you away.

BIRD.

[*Amazed.*] But is that all you sent for me for?

TROWER.

Sent for you?

BIRD.

Yes; I had your note.

TROWER.

[*Rises, crosses* C.] Oh yes, of course; I beg your pardon, I'm losing my memory. [*Comes to* BIRD, C., *and speaks seriously.* BIRD *is sitting; sits near him,* C.] What are you doing with yourself?

BIRD.

[*Innocently.*] Nothing, dear old boy.

TROWER.

Can it last?

BIRD.

[*In the same tone.*] No, dear old boy.

TROWER.

Any plans?

BIRD.

None, dear old boy.

TROWER.

Bridge?

BIRD.

[*With a touch of enthusiasm.*] Ah, what a game! Last night I made it no trumps on five to the Ace, Queen of Hearts, the King, Queen, Jack of Clubs.

TROWER.

[*Interrupting.*] Yes, I know; most exciting, but I've no time for it now. There isn't a living for you in Bridge, anyway.

BIRD.

There might have been; but—[*with deep melancholy*]—unfortunately there are those—who forget—to pay.

TROWER.

Then there is nothing for it but work of some sort.

BIRD.

Yes; but what sort of work can I do? I'm a martyr to self-distrust. I cannot dig, and to beg I am—no, I can't well quote that to you of all people, dear old boy.

TROWER.

I've found you a place.

BIRD.

[*With a grimace.*] A place. Dear Jim, that sounds like——

TROWER.

A position, then.

BIRD.

Worse. Shall we say genteel employment?

TROWER.

[*Angrily, rises, and puts chair back at desk* R.] I've no time for any of your damned affectations, Cecil. If you can't be serious, I chuck the whole thing.

BIRD.

Forgive me, Jim. I'm really sorry, and frightfully grateful. Tell me more.

TROWER.

Do you know Koppinger? [*Returns to* C.

BIRD.

Know the name. Who is he?

TROWER.

New man from South Africa.

BIRD.

What! Another of them?

TROWER.

Yes.

BIRD.

"The cry is, 'Still they come!'"

TROWER.

A devilish good thing too.

BIRD.

But they eat up the old acres like locusts.

TROWER.

They save the old acres from the jerry-builder.

BIRD.

I suppose you are right. You generally are.

TROWER.

Not at all; but your constant sneer at new people always bores me. Take Koppinger, for instance—a splendid chap. He's roughed it, which you have never done; made sacrifices, which you have never done; used his brains, which you have never done; and has won a fortune. Now he looks for some of the refinements which you were born to but have never deserved. He wants to surround himself and family with some of the graces of life. 'Pon my word, I see nothing unworthy in that.

BIRD.

What you call laudable ambition.

TROWER.

Exactly. Well, I want you to go and have a chat with Koppinger.

BIRD.

What does dear old Kop want with me?

TROWER.

Secretary.

BIRD.

I can scarcely address an envelope.

TROWER.

If that were true it wouldn't matter. You know very well what you can do for him. Put him into

the right Clubs—see that he meets the right people —show him round.

BIRD.

[*Coldly.*] What you call run him.

TROWER.

That sort of thing—social guidance. You'll be able to teach him that indispensable accomplishment, Bridge.

BIRD.

[*Suddenly beaming.*] Bridge! It's been the dream of my life to teach a millionaire that noble game.

TROWER.

Then you know something about horses.

BIRD.

Don't I!

TROWER.

Much less than you think, but sufficient for the purpose. Koppinger wants his own racing-stable.

BIRD.

[*Breathless with joy at the prospect, rises.*] A racing-stable! It's too splendid!

TROWER.

[*Dryly.*] I thought you would say so.

BIRD.

[*Crossing to* R.] Another dream of my life! Will I run dear old Kop? He who lives shall see. [*Walks the stage.*] Kop's going to be a—*success.* He's

going to roll home. Wait till you see me what you call bring old Kop past the bushes.

TROWER.

That's all right; you had better go and see him now. 207 Belgrave Square.

BIRD.

I will. You are too splendid, Jim. A million thanks!

[*Shakes his hand. He takes his hat and stick.*

JARVIS.

[*Appears at door and announces*] Miss Prescott!

*Enter* MISS PRESCOTT.

BIRD.

[*Shaking her hand.*] How do you do—[*crossing her to* L.]—you dear thing? I'm in a frightful hurry, but I'll give you a good tip. Have a bit on old Kop! [*Exit* L.

MISS P.

Well, I ask you—Has Cecil gone mad?

TROWER.

[C.] Bother Cecil! You have something to propose. Say you have. [*Takes her hands.*

MISS P.

[L.C.] Perhaps I have.

TROWER.

Will you be a perfect angel—that is, be yourself,

and wait ten minutes for me? There are three useful but boring men waiting for me in the library.

MISS P.

All right! Be off with you!

TROWER.

You won't mind being alone?

[*Going to desk and gathering up some papers.*

MISS P.

I'm not likely to be alone long. Reggie knew I was coming, and he's taken to following me about like an old Newfoundland dog.

TROWER.

Reggie is a golden creature, but I must have you to myself. [*Going up* C.]

MISS P.

Don't worry. I'll get rid of him. [*Exit* TROWER, C. [*Listening to the slam of the front door.*] There he is, of course! Absurd person.

[*Looks in the glass at desk.*

*Enter* JARVIS.

JARVIS.

Lord Reginald Dugdale!

*Enter* LORD REGINALD.

[*Exit* JARVIS.

MISS P.

[*Affecting surprise.*] You, Reggie!

LORD R.

[*Affecting surprise.*] You, dear friend!

MISS P.

How pleasant!

LORD R.

Delightful! [*They shake hands*, C., *puts down his hat and sits* L. *on sofa* R.] Where's Jim?

MISS P.

He's engaged. And when he's disengaged, he'll be engaged with me.

LORD R.

Then I'm to go?

MISS P.

No, no, no! Sit still and talk to me in the meantime.

[*Pause. Suddenly begins to laugh.*

LORD R.

[*Looking up surprised.*] You are amused.

MISS P.

Yes. Don't you think we're a very funny pair?

LORD R.

Are we?

MISS P.

Yes; we meet on an average about ten times a week, and yet we are always so very surprised.

LORD R.

I suppose that is so, though it has never struck me before. I'm a very dull person.

MISS P.

I sometimes think we must have fallen into a habit of following each other.

LORD R.

No; it's my fault, dear friend. It has never suggested itself to me before, but I see it now. I *do* follow you; I do blunder into places because I know you are there. It isn't quite cricket, I suppose. I'm sorry.

MISS P.

Oh, Reggie, don't say that.

LORD R.

I know I'm a frightful bore.

MISS P.

You are the only person who would dare to say so before me.

LORD R.

I'll try to explain. Of course I've heaps of friends, and I hope I'm grateful, but loneliness seems to pursue me like a shadow. I sometimes feel, even in a crowd, that I am the only human being in the world.

MISS P.

Extraordinary!

LORD R.

I never feel it when I am with you, dear friend.

MISS P.

Well, I ask you——

LORD R.

When I am with you I am perfectly happy sitting quite still without uttering a word.

MISS P.

You often do, Reggie.

LORD R.

I've confessed to being a bore.

MISS P.

You are just the dearest old thing in the world. There!

LORD R.

You are too good.

MISS P.

Reggie—[*looking down*]—why don't you—[*Pause.*

LORD R.

Why don't I what?

MISS P.

[*Abruptly.*] Nothing! [*Rises and goes up* C. *Long pause, as she shakes her fist at him—aside.*] Why doesn't he? [*Aloud.*] Perfectly happy, Reggie, sitting quite still.

LORD R.

Perfectly. [*Pause.*

MISS P.

Without uttering a word.

[*Goes right up to back,* C.

LORD R.

Yes. [*Turning on couch.*] Of course, I must be able to see you.

MISS P.

Oh, seeing me is part of the cure, is it?

[*Coming down to back of couch.*

LORD R.

And hearing your voice.

MISS P.

[*Leaning over the back of sofa* L., *and looking at him.*] Then you—you must really like me a little?

LORD R.

[*Embarrassed.*] Well, yes. [*Turns to her.*] Don't think me rude, but more than a little.

MISS P.

How much, for instance?

LORD R.

[*Turning away from her.*] It would be impertinent of me to tell you. You would think so.

MISS P.

[*Crossing* C.] For heaven's sake, Reggie, don't think I'm so touchy as all that.

LORD R.

How much? [*Follows her to* C.] Well, more than —more than I can say.

MISS P.

Then why don't you——

LORD R.

What, dear friend?

MISS P.

Nothing! [*Looking at him.*] "Eyes have they and they will not see; ears have they and they will not hear."

LORD R.

To whom are you alluding?

MISS P.

To you for one.

LORD R.

I am a fool, am I not?

MISS P.

Yes You profess to like me more than you can say—you follow me about everywhere—and yet—[*She abruptly breaks off*]—Reggie, I must ask you not to follow me about any more. People will begin to talk. Perhaps they are talking already. They will think you—you care very much.

LORD R.

[*Earnestly—taking her hand.*] I do, dear friend.

MISS P.

[*A happy smile coming into her face, which is turned away from him.*] Well—[*pause—she is disappointed*]—you had better go now, Reggie. I can't stand any more. [*Going* R. *a little.*] I have one of my

nervous attacks coming on. You may think it's temper—but—it's not. It's simply nerves. Heaven knows that I've given you more encouragement than a really modest woman should. [*Moving to* R. *of desk.*] You had better go away.

LORD R.

[*Who has come nearer.*] You are so immeasurably above me. I wouldn't dare.

MISS P.

[*Still impatiently.*] Tell me then quickly, before you go, what you wouldn't dare.

LORD R.

I mean I haven't the courage to ask you to be my wife.

MISS P.

If you will find the courage to ask, I shall never find the courage to refuse.

[*Moves down below* R.C. *table.*

LORD R.

Molly, is it possible——

[*Going to her* R.C. *He slowly kisses her.*

MISS P.

[*Disengages herself, wiping her eyes.*] Forgive me, but I have always loved you, Reggie, and I have never been kissed by a man before—except pecks, which don't count.

*Enter* TROWER, C., *comes down* C.

TROWER.

Now I'm free. Ah, Reggie, how are you? [*They*

*shake hands. Looks from one to the other.*] You two haven't been quarrelling, have you?

MISS P.

Quarrelling! [REGGIE *picks up his hat and stick from sofa* L.] Reggie and I? Well, I ask you!

[*Crosses to* REGGIE.

TROWER.

[C.] Forgive me, but I thought you looked upset.

MISS P.

[L.C.] Shall I tell him, Reggie?

LORD R.

[*Hastily going up to* L.] When I'm gone; I'm frightfully shy. Good-bye, Jim. I'll call to-morrow.

[*Exit* REGGIE, L.

TROWER.

Good-bye, Reggie. [*Turns.*

MISS P.

The dear! [*Looking after him.*

TROWER.

[R.C. *Going eagerly to* MISS P.] Well?

MISS P.

Well?

TROWER.

You have something to tell me.

MISS P.

Do you mean about myself or about you?

TROWER.

Forgive me; I'm brutally selfish, but I can only think of one thing.

MISS P.

Poor old Jim! [*Sits on couch* L.] I want to know, first of all, what you've done since I saw you. You were going down there.

TROWER.

[*Sits by her on couch* L.] I went.

MISS P.

Well?

TROWER.

Twice.

MISS P.

[*Slight pause.*] You saw her?

TROWER.

No!

[*Says this slowly, with a ring of unutterable grief in his voice.*

MISS P.

[*Laying her hand sympathetically on his.*] Tell me.

TROWER.

Mrs. Selby answered the door. Miss Olive couldn't see me then or at any time, she said. She was quite well, but had locked herself in her room. The blinds were down.

MISS P.

And what did you do?

TROWER.

What could I do but come away, baffled, humiliated, lower in my own sight than the lowest dog I met in the village.

MISS P.

What else?

TROWER.

I have written, of course, many times.

MISS P.

Without reply?

TROWER.

[*Bitterly.*] Oh no—I had a reply to-day.

[*Takes the returned letters from his pocket and shows them to her.*

[*They bend over them for a moment in silence. Suddenly* TROWER *bends down and covers his face with his hands.* MISS P. *very softly rests her hand on his head.* TROWER *rises and walks up to desk* R. *He lays the letters down and stands for a few moments with his back to* MISS P. *and the audience. Having controlled himself he turns and comes down a little.*

[MOLLY *rises and crosses* C. *to him.*

Forgive me, Molly. I'm afraid I'm an awful ass; but it's a terrible thing when the love that is breaking your heart is outraged in that sort of way.

[*Points to the letters.*

MISS P.

[*Speaking very earnestly and with growing enthusi-*

*asm.*] You suffer, but suffering is good for love. [C.] You are humiliated, but humiliation is good for love. You wait, you fear, you dare not hope. Your proud, indifferent heart is caught and melted and humbled to the dust. You are capable even of tears—all that is good for love——

TROWER.

Molly, what has come over you?

MISS P.

[*With an indescribable eloquence of gesture.*] I ask you! Have you anything more to tell me?

[*Sits sofa* L.

TROWER.

[C.] Nothing. My resources are exhausted. I'm waiting for you. Really, it's a little absurd. This child—this little country girl—not even particularly pretty—do you think her pretty?

MISS P.

Oh, yes.

TROWER.

Well, but a ridiculous person all the same, occupying but a small amount of space—[*he is talking dreamily and half to himself*]—very shy and retiring—rather prone to silence, but with a voice that lingers in one's hearing, and eyes, too, that speak—sometimes—and a smile, swift and sudden as a sunbeam. [*His voice has been low and caressing. There is a slight pause; suddenly he strikes himself sharply on the breast as if waking himself from a day-dream. He turns to* MISS P., *who has been watching and listening to him with a sympathetic smile.*] You were saying, Molly——

MISS P.

Nothing at the moment.

TROWER.

You promised to help me.

MISS P.

I've begun.

TROWER.

What have you done?

MISS P.

What does a woman generally do in an emergency?

TROWER.

[*Brings chair from* R. *desk to* C. *and sits.*] I don't know. Consults her bosom friend, perhaps.

MISS P.

No.

TROWER.

Buys a new hat, perhaps.

MISS P.

No.

TROWER.

Goes to her favourite palmist, perhaps.

MISS P.

No.

TROWER.

My imagination is exhausted. What does she do?

MISS P.

She invents a lie suitable to the occasion.

TROWER.

Good women?

MISS P.

The best!

TROWER.

[*With a faint smile.*] Shocking!

MISS P.

My lie came to me this morning while I was having my early tea. I thought it a beauty.

TROWER.

Do give me an opportunity of sharing your admiration.

MISS P.

I think I can recall the very words. "Mr. Trower very dangerously ill. He repeats your name constantly. I think you should come. I shall be there."

TROWER.

[*Slowly.*] You wrote that to Olive?

MISS P.

I thought it wiser to telegraph it.

TROWER.

You telegraphed that to Olive?

MISS P.

[*Rises, crosses* C.] I telegraphed those words to Olive

Lawrence at a quarter to ten this morning. I wouldn't even trust my maid to do it.

TROWER.

But I'm not dangerously ill.

MISS P.

In body you're not—that's where the lie comes in. In mind you are—that's where the artfulness comes in.

TROWER.

She won't come.

MISS P.

She will if she loves you.

TROWER.

If she comes—which she won't—how am I to explain the—the well-intentioned misrepresentation?

MISS P.

[*Ingenuously.*] Put it down to me, of course. And, Jim, be firm. Remember that all nice women like the man to be the master. You built yourself up in this girl's heart as something strong, to be leaned upon. Then you destroyed the edifice and left her struggling in the dark. You must rebuild it, my dear Jim.

TROWER.

I would try—I would risk it—if she would only come.

MISS P.

I'll bet you a box of gloves she does.

TROWER.

Done! If she comes, when do you think——?

MISS P.

I thought of that—[*going down* L.]—and consulted the A B C. She will have had my wire about twelve, taken the first train, which is due at Paddington at 6.5. You may expect her within half-an-hour.

[*Goes to window* L.

TROWER.

[*Walks stage restlessly.*] She won't come.

MISS P.

She will.

*Enter* JARVIS.

JARVIS.

Lady Margaret Staines.

*Enter* LADY MARGARET.

LADY M.

How do you do, dear?

[*To* MOLLY, *who is up* L. *She and* MOLLY *kiss.*

MISS P.

Jarvis!

[*Goes to door and talks aside to* JARVIS. MARGARET *and* JIM *advance to each other and shake hands.*

LADY M.

I'm afraid I'm a late visitor, Jim, but I'm going abroad to-morrow; I thought I'd call.

[JARVIS *exits* L.

[TROWER *starts slightly. Every one is uncomfortable. Pause.*

[TROWER *moves restlessly about.*

TROWER.

Of course, I ought to have called, Margaret; but I——

LADY M.

Of course you ought not, Jim. Under the circumstances I can only see my most intimate friends. One must observe the proprieties, which I thank you for pointing out to me at Blair House.

TROWER.

I am sure I didn't mean it unkindly.

LADY M.

[*Quickly.*] I know you didn't. You were most kind I'm only sorry that I'm so ridiculously impulsive. Do you think I outrage etiquette in coming here to-day to say good-bye?

MISS P.

Nonsense; of course not.

LADY M.

By the way, I must get out of the way of saying Jim. The world is so censorious. And yet I can't

well say Mr. Trower. It would sound so common. What about James?

[*She says this perfectly seriously. Sits on sofa by* MOLLY.

[TROWER *looks at her seriously, but he suddenly begins to laugh nervously. Then the humour of the thing strikes the others, and they begin to laugh. The laughter increases and is prolonged.*

MISS P.

James! Well, I ask you!

TROWER.

Too funny!

LADY M.

[*Serious again.*] We were talking of my impulsiveness. It really used to be dreadful. Why, on one occasion, when we were staying at Blair House, I actually—but Molly knows—I quite lost my head; didn't I, dear?

MISS P.

I wish you wouldn't talk like that. It hurts me.

LADY M.

I wouldn't hurt you for worlds, dear. You don't know how good she's been to me. She has come to me every day; no woman knows how really good women can be until she's in trouble. I suppose you good people are going to Ascot.

MISS P.

Don't, Margaret.

LADY M.

[*Innocently.*] Don't what, dear?

MISS P.

Don't drop back into that conventional tone.

LADY M.

My dear!

MISS P.

It's perfectly horrid of you.

LADY M.

Don't fly at me, dear.

TROWER.

May I express the earnest hope that you two won't quarrel?

MISS P.

We won't. [*Rises and crosses round* L. *of sofa to back.*] I'm too happy to quarrel, even with Margaret. Give me a kiss, darling. [*Kisses* MARGARET.] I'm ashamed to be so happy when you two are so sad. But I can't help it. I'm going to marry Reggie.

TROWER.

[*Pleased.*] Really!

LADY M.

Really! [*Rises and goes to her* C.] You dear old thing!

[*Kisses her again.*

MISS P.

Yes; it's quite true. When he asked me, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, and oh! how my

heart thumped, just as if I had run up four flights of stairs. I know my nose turned scarlet. [TROWER *takes up mirror from table and holds it up for* MOLLY *to see herself.*] And my hair! [*It is tumbled.*] I ask you to look at my hair! I ask you, Jim! [*Going up* R.] I must go to your room and make myself possible.

[*Exit* R.

[*Slight pause after* MISS P.'s *exit. Then* LADY M. *crosses to* R.C., *nearer to* TROWER, *who is* R. *of* R.C. *table, and speaks very rapidly.*

LADY M.

[*Sits at desk.*] I only called to ask you not to bother about me! [*He is about to speak.*] No, don't speak; don't answer me at all. I want to say what's in my mind before Molly comes back. So you mustn't be at all uneasy, or make any effort to avoid me. I'll manage so that we won't meet for some time anyway, and without people noticing it.

TROWER.

My dear Margaret——

LADY M.

It isn't in my nature to keep on loving a man when I know he cares for some one else. I always chuck when the pressure comes—I have all my life. I might perhaps have made something of poor Arthur if I had had a stronger nature, and I did stand a good deal; but when that Blanville person appeared on the scene I simply chucked—just as I do now, Jim—without any ill-will. [*Rises and*

*crosses* L.C., TROWER *following her.*] There! that's all I had to say, except to ask you if you do arrange to marry some one you will write me a line. I shan't mind in the least reading it in a letter when I'm alone; but I should very seriously object to reading it suddenly in a newspaper at breakfast before other people. That would bore me.

TROWER.

Margaret, we can't control the uncontrollable. Will you forgive me?

LADY M.

Freely! [*Takes his hand.*] I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll exchange forgiveness, divide the blame, and—[*with a touch of tenderness*]—you'll be generous, and let me keep all the memories!

*Enter* MISS P., *and crosses* L., *and down to window. She glances at the others, then discreetly goes up and looks out of the window.* LADY M. *and* TROWER *look at each other for a moment, still with clasped hands.*

LADY M.

Good-bye, Jim. [*Shakes hands with him again.*

TROWER.

Good-bye, Margaret.

MISS P.

[*Coming down quickly.*] There is a cab driving up. [*Moving to* C.

LADY M.

I don't want a cab. [*Going up towards* L. *door.*] I have my carriage.

MISS P.

Of course, I know, dear. [*Aside to* TROWER, C.] Go in there, and leave everything to me.

[TROWER *goes up* C.

TROWER.

[*Up* C.] Good-bye, Margaret.

LADY M.

[*Up* L.] Good-bye, James.

[*He shakes his head at her with a smile, and exit C.*

MISS P.

Margaret, it is rather awkward—it is she, Olive Lawrence. [*Coming down to* MARGARET.

LADY M.

[*First frowning, then shrugging her shoulders.*] What a bore for me! Never mind; I'm going anyway. Good-bye, dear; come and see me before I go to-morrow. [*They kiss.*

[JARVIS *opens the door to admit* OLIVE. OLIVE *enters timidly; starts back on seeing* LADY M.

LADY M.

[*With an affectation of airy cheerfulness.*] Good afternoon, Miss Lawrence. [*Crossing* L.] Good-bye, Molly, dear. To-morrow, then!

[*Exit* LADY M.

MISS P.

[*To* OLIVE.] It was good of you to come. It was the right thing to do.

[*Takes her over and seats her by writing-desk.*

OLIVE.

Is he—is he better?

MISS P.

I'm going to see. [*Going up* C.] Wait here for a moment. [*Smiles, and exits* C.

[OLIVE, *who appears to be rather alarmed, remains perfectly still for a few moments. Rises. Then she lets her eyes wander round the room. Presently they light upon her own letters, which are lying on the writing-table. She goes a little nearer and looks at them with curiosity and mistrust.*

*Enter* TROWER C., *comes down* C.

[OLIVE *raises her eyes and shrinks back. They look at each other in silence.*

OLIVE.

The telegram said you were dangerously ill.

TROWER.

I am suffering deeply—but I am not ill——

OLIVE.

It was an untruth.

TROWER.

It was the untruth of a very noble-hearted woman.

OLIVE.

Her untruth—and yours.

TROWER.

Not mine. I knew nothing of her telegram till a few minutes ago.

OLIVE.

I'm glad you are not ill, and will go now.

[*With a movement towards* C.

TROWER.

[*Quickly.*] You were looking at those letters when I came in.

OLIVE.

[*In a low voice.*] Yes.

TROWER.

Perhaps it occurred to you as a surprisingly brutal proceeding to have returned them unopened.

OLIVE.

[*Hanging her head a little.*] I might—I—[*Pause*

TROWER.

You might—?

OLIVE.

Nothing.

TROWER.

Yes—something. You might have been kinder and burnt them unread yourself. You might have torn them into the smallest of fragments and tossed them in the trout stream. You might have considered a heart filled with remorse as something sacred.

OLIVE.

[*A little agitated.*] You—you have put me in the wrong. I—I would rather go now, if I may.

TROWER.

I wish to ask you one question first. Who set you up to be so implacable a judge of human conduct? I, who know something of the temptations of a man's life, judged myself harshly enough; why do you, who know nothing, judge me more harshly?

OLIVE.

You are quite right. I only know that you are placing me more in the wrong, and that I would like to go away now.

TROWER.

[*Is deeply affected, but controls himself. Hoarsely.*] Lift your face that I may see it once more.

[*She lifts her face. He gazes at her. Suddenly he seizes her in his arms.*

TROWER.

You are mine—mine.

OLIVE.

[*Releasing herself.*] No, no, no!

TROWER.

I beg your pardon. [*Goes to the bell and rings. Comes down* L.C. *and does not look at her again.*] I have rung. Jarvis is waiting to let you out.

[OLIVE *looks at him, goes up* R.C. *a little, then swiftly and silently, unseen by him, goes to writing-table* R., *secures the letters, and conceals them in her bosom.*

OLIVE.

[*Gently.*] Good-bye.

[*Moves towards door* L.C.

TROWER.

Good-bye. [*Below sofa* L.] God bless you.

[OLIVE *stops for a moment up* L.C., *then suddenly comes down to him. The love of him has come back to her face. She comes down* L.C. *to him.*

OLIVE.

Would Mr. Jarvis know—if you kissed me—Jim?

[*He turns and looks at her; she looks gladly in his eyes.*

TROWER.

Olive!

[*He sinks on his knees, catching at her hands. She sinks on the couch* L., *her arms round his head.*

OLIVE.

Jim—Jim—

[*Her face radiant as she bends over him.*

*Slow Curtain.*

THE END